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A PALADIN OF ARABIA

By the Same Author

SHIFTING SANDS

THE BROODING SPIRIT



LEACHMAN IN THE DISGUISE WHICH DECEIVED
EVEN HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS

MAJOR N. N. E. BRAY

A PALADIN OF ARABIA

THE BIOGRAPHY

OF

BREVET LIEUT.-COLONEL G. E. LEACHMAN
C.I.E., D.S.O.,

OF THE

ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT

With a foreword by

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR SAMUEL HOARE, G.C.S.I., D.C.L., LL.D.

L O N D O N

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FOREWORD

IF the war in the West produced few outstanding personalities, the war in the East was the background of three heroes of romance. Of Lawrence everyone knows. His genius, decked out by a strange combination of mystery and publicity, has passed into the realm of history.

Of Soane, sober and quiet in appearance as befitted a former bank clerk, there is still to be written a heroic life. For if few in England remember his record, his exploits remain a vivid memory in Kurdistan.

Of Leachman, sportsman, explorer, leader of men, demi-god amongst the great Bedouin tribes, this book is a fitting and overdue biography.

I did not know him, for he was treacherously murdered five years before my first visit to Iraq. But I heard much of him. Amongst the Arabs there was magic in the name of "Lijman." Amongst the British there were many stories of his astounding exploits. If he had had his way, would not Kut have been relieved? If the statesmen in the West had more resolutely faced the realities of the East, would not he and Arnold Wilson and the gallant company around them have prevented the futile tragedies of the 1920 Rebellion?

Let those who knew him describe him.

Here is the description of Fahed Bey, a sheikh of the Amarat Anaiza and leader of 15,000 fighting men :

"He was tolerant, and not haughty. During his raids he used to ride a camel leading his

horse after him, just as the Arabs do, and he looked after himself, refusing to have any servant. If any of our men wished to minister to him, he declined, saying that he was just a man like them, and he would share their fate, eat, drink, ride, and even draw water from the wells as they did. He baked his bread on the fire and ate it, rode a camel without anyone's assistance and galloped on its back like any Bedu, whose fathers and forefathers had been used to such feats.

"He slept folded in his *farwa* (fur) and *aba* on the bare ground and in the scrub without any cover or tent, and endured the hardships of rain and storm and sun.

"His energy and indefatigable endurance of the conditions of desert life surpassed those of any of its habitués. His sojourn in the desert endeared him to all and they regarded him as one of their sheikhs, for he spoke gently with them and never vexed or enraged any of them; and if they needed anything he was ready to help them. He would not tolerate they should be treated wrongly.

"He knew every hole in the desert, every wadi and hill, and all the watering places, and he knew their names correctly and could travel to them unguided.

"This is our knowledge of Colonel Leachman during his stay with our tribes."

Here is Gertrude Bell's description :

"An intrepid pioneer, whether in travel or in frontier administration, Colonel Leachman's character and vocation could be read on his person. Lean and active, dressed in ancient riding kit, his face full of weather, so that it

looked as if sun and wind and rain had had more to do with the making of it than any human progenitor. The somewhat rugged landscape of his countenance was lit by his eyes, by the acute, observant glance of one whose business it is to make a rapid appreciation of men and things and take instant action.

" His duties did not lead him often to headquarters ; though when they did, there was no one who more enjoyed a good dinner with selected friends and no one who could make the hours pass more gaily with caustic tales of the ways and sayings of the folk who lived in his native land, the wilds, but the stories were not all from his quarter ; a Bedouin sheikh would drop into your office and relate how 'Naj'm' (the star, so he was frequently called in the western desert—a star of erratic course) had arrived in his *trambail* (motor car) at some remote grazing ground : ' And, wallah ! that *trambail* is like a steed under him. It leaps the wadis and it rushes over the spring grass, wallah ! like a horse bred among the tribes. And then we offered the slaughtering (*Qadanna al dhabihah*—the narrator alluded to the sheep which had been seethed for supper) and " Naj'm " sat by the fire and we talked through the night.' But he would add, ruefully : ' He has a strong hand, wallah ! ' from which it might be gathered that the talk was not wholly unrelated to tribal misdemeanours.

" I met him coming back from one of these excursions, on horseback that time. It was on the road from the Euphrates Bridge to Kufa, through the ruts and furrows of which my *trambail* was struggling. To us, from the sandy hillocks, emerged a strange company,

half in uniform, half in Arab robes, Colonel Leachman in the midst of it and, except for the white tabs of the political officer on his collar, indistinguishable from the rest. All were armed, one carried a hawk on his wrist, the Arab greyhounds ran at the horses' heels—'Naj'm' travelled like any of his brother magnates of the desert. The same hospitable colleague housed us that night, the *dhabihah* was offered and the talk got under way. It grew and grew in verisimilitude till towards midnight I tactfully went to bed. Our host was rather hollow-eyed next morning, though he declared that he had spent an unforgettable evening, but 'Naj'm's' countenance was inscrutable, and after a hearty breakfast he mounted his horse, collected his rascalion escort and set out on his way to God knows where."

Such was Leachman in the eyes of an Arab and a British friend.

Carrying his life in his hand, ready to wager it whenever the challenge came, he was predestined to a death of violence.

As with Handyside on the North-West Frontier, so with Leachman at Khan Nuqta, death with whom he had so boldly played and beaten in so many encounters, cornered him at last.

Yet let no one think that the death of such men cuts short their careers. Rather does it complete their life's work and by dramatizing their personality perpetuate their memory.

SAMUEL HOARE.

January 1936.

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PREFACE

THE life story of Lieut.-Colonel Gerald Leachman is long overdue. Chance has given me the privilege of writing it. The few incidents given in my book, *Shifting Sands*, of the amazing career of this heroic figure brought me letters from all parts of the world. Without exception the writers, who resided in regions as far apart as New Zealand, India and Texas, and who represented men of every walk of life, from an unemployed but stout-hearted miner in Yorkshire, a cattle-rancher in the United States, and a general of the Army in India, evinced a desire to know more. All the writers expressed their pleasure that at last an attempt had been made to bring to the public notice the noble and romantic personality of one whose exploits have thrilled two armies, and earned the unstinted admiration of the Chief German Intelligence Officer with the Turkish Army in Mesopotamia.

It became obvious that there should be no further delay in presenting to the public some account of one of the most remarkable men of the present or indeed of any other generation.

Lieut.-Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson, under whom Colonel Leachman had served in Mesopotamia, had himself intended to write this biography, but with the generosity which is characteristic of him he asked me to undertake the task and handed over to me all the material he had in his possession.

Mr. St. John Philby, who has had an unrivalled experience of Arabia, who knew Leachman well, and

who is himself an Arabian scholar and explorer of repute, had prepared a most valuable draft for publication, of which I unashamedly acknowledge that I have taken full advantage.

Sir Samuel Hoare, who has been kind enough to write the foreword, likewise had considered writing Leachman's life story, but affairs of State made it impossible for him to do so.

It is obvious, then, that there were others far better qualified in almost every respect to write this biography. It is, perhaps, only in one qualification that I, myself, have any title to undertake the task. Leachman was my friend in the true sense of the word and betrayed his inner feelings to me in a manner which, I venture to think, he did to no one else. The reason for this I am unable to explain unless it is that, in spite of possessing a host of friends and acquaintances, Leachman was a lonely figure. It is possible that with me he felt a bond of sympathy and understanding.

However greatly his courage, his high sense of duty and his enterprise might be revealed by a collection of documents and cold facts, without some inkling of the inner urgings of his nature the true nobility of Leachman's life, his charity and goodness would never be revealed. As political officer in charge of Karbela in 1918, on the Red Sea Coast where I was Intelligence Officer in 1917, and when we were both home on leave in 1919, I was privileged to be closely associated with him and got to know him intimately.

There are some who have attempted to compare Leachman with other men who played a notable part in Arabia during the War. It is impossible to do so. Leachman was a unique personality. It is doubtful whether history can show anyone who resembles him at all; certainly the War produced no-one with whom he could be compared.

There is no doubt in my mind, and in that of others well qualified to judge, that the genius of Leachman was wasted and that if his courage, talents, and unexampled energy had been used in other directions, his title to fame would have been even greater than it is. There was an explanation for this. He was so reticent and retiring that few realized his true worth. His courage was exploited, but his real merits were unrecognized. He was employed chiefly in suppressing turbulent Arab tribes, when his inclinations and capabilities merited greater opportunities for practical expression. Even so, apart from the heroism he displayed, he has earned fame and merited the gratitude of his own countrymen and that of the Arabs for his unequalled work in Arabia, before, during, and after the Great War.

This biography presents that work to the reader ; but it will not come amiss to state here that Leachman's association with the Bedouin tribes has had a profound and lasting effect. In fact, it may truthfully be said to have completely changed the mental outlook of those unruly sons of Ishmael and made possible the present tranquil government of the young kingdom of Iraq.

Throughout the centuries during which the Turks governed these regions the wilder Arab elements and semi-civilized tribes were never really subdued. They were in constant revolt and were kept in uneasy check, either by bribes, or by punitive expeditions which were becoming less effective as the years went by.

Leachman subdued them practically single-handed, and made the eventual control of them by political officers a possibility.

By his indomitable courage he conquered their turbulence ; by his truth, simplicity and honesty, he won their esteem, and by his fierce protection of their interests he eventually won their love. For the

first time these men, who had so far experienced nothing but hardship and cruelty, realized that life contained for them something less harsh, and the possibility of happiness and peace became dimly apparent to their perceptions. The same applied to Leachman's work in the desert proper, especially among the powerful "Amarat" Bedouin tribe, where his influence became even greater than that of its principal sheikhs—an unprecedented happening in the desert and one never likely to be repeated.

Leachman's life story is not merely a recital of exciting episodes; it also provides a lasting and enduring monument to duty and a noble contribution to the happiness of mankind.

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The thanks of the author are due :

To the Royal Geographical Society, for their kindness in permitting the inclusion of the map of Leachman's two journeys in Arabia which appeared in the *Geographical Journal*, May, 1914 and of the accounts of his explorations in the years 1910 and 1912.

To the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office for permission to reproduce the map of "Mesopotamia" which appeared in the *Official History of the War*, Vol. 4. *Mesopotamian Campaign*, 1914-1918.

To Captain I. Chalmers and the proprietors of *Blackwood's Magazine*, for their courtesy in permitting me to quote extensively from the former's story "O. C. The Desert," published in *Blackwoods' Magazine* for February 1932.

To "J," whose kindly and sympathetic help and valuable suggestions have greatly assisted and encouraged me.

Hope Cove, S. Devon.

1935

PART I

A S P I R A T I O N

CHAPTER I

PETERSFIELD

ON the outskirts of the little country town of Petersfield, on the road leading north through Guildford to London, there stands a warm red-brick house, solidly built and prosperous-looking, with lawns and flowers and trees in plenty. It was in this house which in its tranquil sleepiness reflects the very spirit of those South Downs amidst which it nestles—a spirit even now untouched by the busy forcefulness of the modern world—that there was born to Dr. A. W. Leachman, M.D., and his wife, on July 27, 1880, a son, to be called Gerald Evelyn, whose life story this is.

Dr. Leachman was a man of charming personality, clever, scientific, and a fine musician. Ill-health had obliged him to sacrifice his hopes of a scientific career, for which his gifts inclined him, and to settle down instead as a country doctor in the red-bricked house on the Guildford Road.

Mrs. Leachman was equally charming, a splendid hostess, fond of society and of entertaining, so that the house knew many a happy party both for young and old.

On the date of Gerald's birth there were three daughters, born some years previously, Mabel, Mildred, and Janet. Two brothers had died in infancy. His parents were well off, so that his home-life was harmonious and free from those anxieties it is the lot of many to endure. There were then no harsh circumstances to fashion fortitude—no absence of comforts to call forth endurance. It was just an

ordinary, happy, cultured English family, whose records show no men or women of genius, no intrepid traveller, no administrator, in fact none of special distinction. As his sisters have said, "so far as we know we have had no men or women in our family who have done anything to make them famous, and certainly none resembling Gerald in character or achievement."

No one could have imagined, then, in that year of 1880 that these simple, kindly parents had brought into the world one who would become a "John Nicholson" of Arabia; whose actions would thrill a world of men and give him a place among the heroes of all time. Strange, too, that such peace, both in his home and in his surroundings, should fashion so restless and turbulent a spirit, for Leachman's boyhood and early youth betray scant signs of the volcanic forces of his nature, and still less of the restlessness of his spirit.

How is it, then, that one apparently so true to type in youth, should later spend his life in toil and peril? Such questions are impossible to answer. The history of our country is rich with similar examples. A small Norfolk vicarage sends out a weakly seasick Nelson to make his country supreme upon the waters of the earth. A country cottage and a workhouse combine to mould a Livingstone. The list is unending; we cannot explain these tricks of fate, we must accept them. Perhaps it is that Providence, having need of special tools, fashions them in unexpected manner, and tempers them in the ordeals of perilous experience, to shape them for their destinies. Such, indeed, seems to have been the case with Leachman. As we follow his brief history, we cannot fail to be struck by the manner in which events and circumstances gradually fitted him for the great work he was destined to perform. This fact

gives his life an added interest and induces us to study his boyhood with special care.

Being an only son the stream of family affection flowed, naturally, most strongly in his direction and, since his sisters were several years older, he was made much of, perhaps too much so, for he was left little to himself; this he strongly resented and frequently demonstrated his objections by being extremely naughty. Thus a naturally impetuous nature was encouraged to kick against restraint, and an innate objection to control developed still more strongly in the man, so that one of his chiefs later said of him that his behaviour sometimes verged upon the insubordinate. However that may be, his independence of character was apparent, even in his early childhood, and the circumstances of his birth tended to increase rather than diminish an inherent dislike of restraint.

On the other hand the valley in which he spent his childhood undoubtedly helped to fashion his inclinations. Its quietness tutored his mind to find in its solitude, not loneliness, but, when restraint was loosened, the opportunity to plan and execute in accordance with his own imaginings, and these were lively and ambitious. He loved the birds, the butterflies and the insects, which abounded in the neighbourhood, and studied their ways with care and keenness. From an early age his eye became trained to notice, and that instantly, minute details of behaviour and form. The lure of the collector and of the student of nature often took him far afield, and amongst other places, together with his sister Janet, who was his chief companion, he loved to visit the New Forest, so rich in the wild life he liked to watch. In this manner his wanderings became both purposeful and occasions for practical observation. The careful treatment of his specimens

and the patience required in setting them, assisted to train him in an orderliness and neatness he exhibited throughout his life.

He was, even when quite young, a keen and appreciative reader, he loved music and as a boy possessed a good voice. He was a very reserved yet a genial little host to the youngsters so frequently invited to his home. His reticence, a trait he early displayed, was inherent. He was affectionate but undemonstrative, had little to say about himself but was a great talker on general subjects. We learn as little from those early days regarding his real feelings as we do later on, when we find that his letters to his mother give only the vaguest details of his actions and less of his inner thoughts.

In spite of this reticence he was in no sense surly or morose ; on the contrary, he was an excellent companion even as a small boy, was generous to a fault and loved having a good time, when he would be boisterous with good spirits. He later became an excellent host and a wonderful raconteur—so long as the narrative was not a personal one. Brought up in a comfortable and well-ordered home he learnt to appreciate pleasant surroundings and good food, of which he became a critic at the age of seven. He was most particular about his clothes, sometimes almost fussy about them, but for this there was a reason, as will be seen.

The glimpses which we have of his boyhood and early surroundings are of the greatest importance, for they provide a clue to his real character ; for in a sense that character was dual, on the one hand rather indolent, humorous, prosaic, on the other volcanic, tense, brilliant. His nature was open and frank, yet he had the greatest dislike to revealing his innermost thoughts, even to his mother. He often deliberately conveyed a false impression of brusque-

ness and cynicism, and frequently hid his deepest feelings under a biting sarcasm. Being undemonstrative in his affections, his mother never really understood him, indeed it must be asked whether any one did. He had a quick and lively temper, even as a child, which certainly did not improve with the years, but if his childish outbursts were of the nature of those he displayed as a man, it can be positively stated that his rages were frequently purposely simulated to gain some end, for he was a consummate actor. But, even when his outbursts were genuine, his fiery temperament soon cooled, and the innate generosity of his nature more often than not led him to recompense the victim of his wrath.

Though destined to become a soldier, he evinced no special keenness for the profession of arms. Yet when quite a small boy, and the possessor of a tricycle, he excitedly followed a yeomanry regiment for some distance through the town, until his little legs gave out. His childish determination was rewarded, for he returned, proud and triumphant, at the head of the regiment, in fact at the head of every one, including the colonel himself, for, held firmly by the latter's arm, he rode on the pommel of the saddle. We do not know what became of the tricycle; he must have abandoned it with little regret, thinking only of the adventure he was having.

At the age of seven he went to a private school, "Ovingdean," near Brighton. After he had been there a few days, he wrote, boastfully, "A very good place this, the food is better than at home."

A fortnight later, the novelty having worn off, he wrote, "this place is not so nice as I thought," and, later still, completely disillusioned, "this is a dreadful place, the boys use awful words, fool and ass, all the time." He suggested that his recall home would be to everyone's advantage. But he remained there

the allotted time, until he went to Charterhouse in 1893.

Like many others whose youth promised little but who have later made their mark in the world of men, his school days were uneventful. He shone neither as an athlete nor as a scholar ; indeed his progress at work occasioned some misgivings as to whether or not he would pass into Sandhurst ; in this, however, he was successful.

CHAPTER II

S.S. PAVONIA

As at school so at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, Leachman gained no special distinction; he was smart, efficient and conscientious, but, while he was very popular with his fellow cadets and was the leading spirit in all their diversions, he brought upon himself but little notice from his superiors; for this there was a reason.

His efficiency was hidden under the cloak of his extreme modesty, he did his work so quietly and unostentatiously that the eyes of his instructors were seldom drawn in his direction. Nor did Sandhurst provide him with the opportunity to display his independence of character; his actions there were necessarily controlled, his exact task allotted, and its method of execution clearly defined. His nature demanded freedom of action and his own methods of execution, which were unorthodox but effective.

He passed out of Sandhurst when still in his nineteenth year and, although he could not then realize it, he was launched almost immediately upon his life of adventure, for on receiving his commission he was appointed to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, then stationed in Malta, and the regiment had received orders to proceed on active service to South Africa.

He was now to pass through the harshest school a man may experience—the school of war—and he received instructions to embark on the S.S. *Pavonia* which was due to leave Southampton on February 10, 1900.

From the peace and quiet of his secluded valley, with its near horizons of wooded hills, he was now to wander over the vast African veldt; he was to exchange the comfort and ease of his happy home for the camp-fire and bivouac and instead of the quiet ordered life and the security of his little country town he was to participate in burnings, looting, and bloodshed—a drastic and momentous change for a young lad on the threshold of life. It is instructive to see how he reacted to the prospects of such a change.

At the time of the conflict in South Africa, war was still regarded more as an adventure than anything else. Most men set forth to it in a state of pleasurable excitement and keen speculation. Leachman in his letters home displayed no apparent emotion. It did not appear to concern him where his regiment was going, nor what his own prospects might be. His mind was very simply constructed, he lived for the moment; if the moment was unpleasant he said so in a few terse words and with a dry humour which no situation could suppress.

And so on February 10, 1900, he stood on the deck of the *Pavonia* of the Cunard Line, the latest joined subaltern of the Royal Sussex Regiment, one of thirteen hundred soldiers bidding farewell for the first time to that England which he loved so passionately even then, and to his kindly folk, of whom he was destined to see so little in the years to come.

The beginning of his wanderings was not too pleasant. "I am not quite sure I altogether care for a life on the ocean wave," he wrote to his mother in his first letter home, "anyway not the sort of life we have had lately, we really have had a rough voyage so far. The night after we left Southampton it was very rough, which did for most people, including me. I was all right when I was lying down but the moment I tried to sit up, I wasn't all right."

Happily for him, and the others, on that crowded ship the weather had improved by the 14th, on which day, in golden sunshine and sparkling seas, the *Pavonia* passed "Cape Roche off Lisbon" and "plain to be seen" as he described it. He made no further comment on the aspect of the cape but referred abruptly to the food. "They feed you very well on board, but I have not patronized them very much up to now except for the fruit, which is lovely. I am so sorry I wasted such time over my bath last night as we have lovely ones on board."

Here are three interesting little side-lights on his character, and on the way his mind was working. Just as in his first letter to his home from school the quality of the food took precedence over his other novel experiences, so in this, the first letter on the way to war, the excellence of the food stood out beyond the beauty of Cape Roche. He enjoyed the baths on board and grudged the curtailment of the last intimate talks with his people, sacrificed to the luxuriousness of a splendidly prolonged bath. His first thoughts would appear to have been connected with his own comfort and then, with equal abruptness, his passionate humanity showed itself in a burst of indignation. "The worst thing we do on board is going into the troop decks; if there is a sight on board that would prevent a man enlisting it is the sight beneath the decks—Oh! it does put one off one's food." Then he ended his letter with equal unexpectedness: "we are just entering the Straits—your loving son."

For the first time in his life he set his eyes upon the most famous straits in the world; he made no comment, he showed no apparent interest; yet it is known from what transpired later that his keen eye had noted in an instant every visible detail of that stupendous fortress.

The Rock itself, seen at close hand on February 15, called for words of unfeigned enthusiasm. "I was awfully struck by Gib.; I think it a most wonderful place, far bigger than I expected it to be. We got in about four in the afternoon and left about eight at night. That was on Thursday; up to yesterday it was absolutely calm but to-day there is a big sea running. . . ."

At Gibraltar they got news of the war and everybody was very excited. "The last we heard was that Joubert was trying to cut Buller off so we don't seem to be getting on very fast," he wrote. Indeed this was the blackest hour of the war, but it was also the hour before the dawn. . . . On February 19 they reached Malta, which "looks a lovely place. It looks just as if it were built of cardboard."

Leachman's regiment embarked here, bringing with them "an enormous amount of baggage," which, as orderly officer, he had to see stowed, a process which took till 3.30 a.m. the following day and prevented him from seeing the town at close quarters. He was appointed to "C" Company and met his brother officers. It was typical of him that he summed them up at once: "there is the colonel, who is a very nice chap and seems very clever and has a lot of war service," his company commander, Captain Robinson, and his fellow subaltern, "a chap called Nelson," whom he liked very much and who had seen active service in the Sudan campaign in the ranks of the Seaforth Highlanders. On Saturday, February 24, Gibraltar was passed once more. Here

"great excitement was caused by the receipt of a signal to 'heave to'—everyone was afraid that our orders for the Cape had been countermanded, but it was nothing more

serious than a short delay, to permit a tug being sent to take off some stowaways who had smuggled themselves on board at Malta."

The tug brought out telegrams and Leachman was terribly shocked at the casualty lists : " what a lot of men from around Petersfield."

On Tuesday 27, they passed Tencriffe. " The Peak is wonderful," he commented, " and looks a tremendous height ; the same afternoon the White Star liner *Gothic* came up quite close and we proceeded to yell at each other for a short space." A few days southward and the weather became very hot, and on one day what was supposed to be cold water registered ninety degrees. We may well believe that it was " dreadful for the men on the troop decks."

On Friday, March 2, they reached St. Vincent. " I never saw a more barren beastly place in my life," he wrote. " Nothing grows there, and about the only things on the island seem to be the black children who appear to flourish."

On Tuesday, March 8, they crossed the " line." Very slow progress was now being made, owing to head winds " and the weeds growing on the bottom of the ship," which combined to reduce speed to 215 miles a day—just under nine knots an hour, the speed of an ocean tramp !

Thus day by day the *Pavonia* made her leisurely way to Cape Town.

But the days were busy. The men had to be kept fit for the heavy task awaiting them ; young officers had to be instructed in their duties ; signalling had to be smartened up—for these were the days before wireless was used in the field and the flag and the helio were of vital importance, as the speed and correctness of their messages might mean the difference between victory and defeat. In the hours

of relaxation concerts and games were organized and, since the humour of British troops can never be suppressed, the "Pavonia Piffle" was put into circulation by some light-hearted souls whose efforts to secure copy could only be defeated by the strictest adherence to all the canons of exemplary behaviour.

At length, three days late, the *Pavonia* dropped her anchor at Cape Town.

CHAPTER III

A RECRUIT ON THE VELDT

THE *Pavonia* reached Cape Town on March 20th, 1900.

"Enter Staff Officer (to very slow music)," wrote Leachman, "and says we leave for Bloemfontein on Wednesday evening the 21st. We received no more information (except rumours) until Monday morning the 26th, when off comes a pilot and takes us in—much excitement at the idea of landing and everybody ready to do so. Enter Staff Officer No. 2 and informs us that we shall go round to East London to disembark. . . . That is the way they do things at Cape Town. . . . I landed yesterday. . . . I think Cape Town is a lovely place; very big and very gay and very clean. . . . I never move anywhere without meeting someone I know; a man in a train asked one of our chaps whether I was on board; he said he knew my father who was a doctor, he had red whiskers. . . . It is very hot here now and when there is any wind the dust is awful."

East London was reached on April 1, and on the following day A, B and C Companies of Leachman's regiment disembarked, leaving the rest of the regiment to follow the next day. On this day, then, the young officer may be said to have started in earnest his experience of war, which was to endure

continuously, except for a brief interval, until the signing of peace two years later.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to trace the whole history of the War in South Africa, with its early bitter experiences and its final triumphs, except to explain the movements in which Leachman took part and to make his story intelligible. We are concerned only with the movements, the actions and thoughts of a single individual, with the impressions the struggle made upon his mind; and with the effect its stern and tragic incidents had upon his character.

That his present experience, so early in life, influenced him throughout his adventurous career, admits of no doubt. How could it fail to do so? That it prepared him for the work he was finally to accomplish, is equally certain. Yet, even at this early age, he was already possessed of qualities which brought him fame in later years. The experiences he was about to undergo strengthened and established them in his character. His letters, uneffusive to a fault, contain a simple, straightforward and unaffected, narration of his experiences. The personal element is, however, shrouded in a restraint it is difficult to penetrate. In fact, it resembles the individual himself. If he found that he was saying too much he would change the subject abruptly and disconcertingly.

At the date on which Leachman landed, the whole course of the campaign, which had started so disastrously for Britain, had been altered by Lord Roberts' march on Bloemfontein, which he entered on March 13, 1900. As if by magic, under his able leadership, the tide of war which had threatened to engulf the various British forces in irretrievable disaster, had turned against those hardy, deadly-shooting, Bible-reading peasants, who had, up till then, defied the

might of an Empire with unflinching resolution and astonishing success.

Lord Roberts having concentrated his forces at Ramdam, twenty miles N.E. of Belmont on the Cape Town–Kimberley railway, set them in motion on Monday, February 12. On March 13 he had entered Bloemfontein in triumph.

The Sussex were under orders to join Lord Roberts' force at Bloemfontein, and there they proceeded in open trucks which were "a bit cool" at night. Leachman wrote on April 6 :

" Well, to begin with we were sent round to E. London which we reached on Monday. Three companies were ordered to leave for Bethulie. We left at 10 p.m. the same night, reaching Bethulie bridge at 12 noon on Wednesday. There we were ordered to go to Bloemfontein. We disentrained because the bridge was blown up and we left at 6 p.m. and marched 4 miles in awful dust and darkness to the station. There we entrained and had a telegram to say we were likely to be attacked on the way. However, we got through safely and reached Bloemfontein at 10.30 on Thursday. S.S.O. (Station Staff Officer) enters and says we are to go down again at 4.0 p.m. Cancelled at 5.0 p.m. So we leave in a terrific thunderstorm for camp. . . . I had nothing to eat from breakfast Wednesday till 7.0 p.m. Thursday (nearly 36 hours—What ho !) However, I am enjoying myself really well. There are 60,000 troops¹ in the camp round us and it is very hard to get anything to eat. By the by, I wasn't able to get a wash from Monday till Thursday, not even wash one's hands."

¹ There were actually 45,000.

After a brief spell in camp the Sussex were moved out to the outpost line flung out in a wide circle to protect the main forces round Bloemfontein.

He wrote on April 11 :

" We are now having a really hard time. On Saturday 6th we left camp and marched two miles to a kopje to the south. There we pitched camp. A company of Sappers joined us. We then started to fortify the place—it is a pretty big work. We have very little to eat, rather less than what the 'Tommies' get, and one never gets a wash.

" It is bitterly cold at night and it is no joke being on picquet—being on picquet means sleeping in some horrid windy place wrapped in a rug and waterproof sheet. Then you have to wander round two miles of sentries twice in a night and you stand to arms an hour before daybreak, most people feel pretty bad next day. D'you know, I find I can sleep pretty well anywhere and in any position? We are the most advanced line of outposts.

" Last night Lord Roberts came up here and I was introduced to him ; he does look a fine old man. He did us a great honour by naming our kopje 'Fort Sussex.' . . . The great nuisance here are staff officers, you get them wandering round in the morning and evening when it is cool. They all come and say that our post belongs to their section and then they go and quarrel about it."

It is strange to-day to think of the Commander-in-Chief being in the front line of outposts. What changes had taken place when that grand old soldier heard the sound of the guns for the last time, roaring their destruction in Flanders ! For England the

South African War represented the last of the wars on the old model, but for Leachman himself the methods of warfare he then learnt were ideal for the type of fighting in which he would later take part. The hardships he endured were of the nature of those he later experienced, and already the first signs of that stamina and control which enabled him to conserve his strength by sleeping when the opportunity occurred, and of that hardihood which enabled him to overcome the extremes of physical exhaustion, can be observed.

On April 18 they were still in the same position, and the inactivity of the enemy permitted Leachman to pay a visit to Bloemfontein where he rather enjoyed himself. The weather was appalling and they experienced a series of the terrible thunderstorms for which South Africa is famous.

“ I was talking to a man the next day who told me we were on one of the most dangerous kopjes for lightning round Bloemfontein, as there is so much iron about. Cheerful, wasn't it ?

“ Rimmington's Scouts are posted near us. I went over the other day and was very much surprised to find that all the officers sleep in feather beds in a ripping farm house. One does not expect that sort of thing from what one hears of Scouts. I had a long talk with Major Rimmington ; he had a lot of talk about him, I thought.”

General Rimmington was a famous leader of Scouts in South Africa, where he rightly earned a big reputation. He commanded the Indian Cavalry Corps during the Great War. He was, as Leachman states, a very vivacious talker and a great wit.

Lord Roberts's preparations for his march on

Pretoria were now complete, and in the early days of May his forced inaction of six weeks came to an end and he was about to launch 45,000 men on another of those irresistible marches for which he had already gained such renown.

The Royal Sussex Regiment now formed part of General Bruce-Hamilton's Brigade, together with the Derbyshire Regiment, the C.I.V. and the Camerons. On May 2 the troops took up their preparatory positions, General Hamilton's Brigade being in the right centre. On May 3 the great march had begun. Every day the troops, who were itching for a fight, expected to gain contact with the enemy, but the mobile Boer retired as soon as he saw our troops deploy for action, and each successive position he had held was found to be evacuated when the troops reached it. The troops were doing from seventeen to twenty miles a day but an even greater effort was to be called for.

Leachman came under fire for the first time in his life on Friday, May 4. It was mostly an artillery duel, till the Boer guns were silenced, when the regiment advanced and came under intermittent rifle fire, one man being hit in the cheek and "It was very alarming hearing the shells come over our heads when they were firing at our guns." But the Boers would not wait, and days of forced marches continued till on May 9 they reached Bloemplaats.

"There we had great sport at the deer and shot several. We also succeeded in shooting a Tommy by mistake. The next day was great; I suppose you saw about it in the papers. We started at 3 in the morning and marched to the Zand River. This we waded across up to our waists and then lay down for two hours, oh! it was cold. This day we were the second company of the leading regiment, so we were in

the thick of it the whole time. At 6.0 a.m. our company was sent to the top of a hill the enemy were firing at, so we had a decidedly unpleasant time. We stayed there till 11.30 with all manner of projectiles coming at us, including pom-poms (one pounder automatic guns) which are really awful. . . . We had a lot of firing but though we fired 2,400 rounds in our company I don't think we did much harm. The enemy was out of the first hills by 11.0 a.m. and we then advanced and took another position. We saw several dead Boers and I found several split cartridges " [a split cartridge gives a ghastly wound and its use is strictly against the rules of civilized warfare] " and rounds which had been covered with verdigris. We advanced against another position, but the Boers cleared, so we bivouaced about 6.0 p.m. after a pretty hard day. . . . I don't understand all that talk about men not taking cover. I can tell you *we* took cover soon enough. Those pom-poms made one wish one was home again. Our casualties were 3 killed and 8 wounded. We don't get much to eat except biscuits, 4 a day. . . . We manage to loot a good deal coming along."

As a matter of fact, although Leachman was at the time not aware of it, he narrowly missed taking part in a severe pitched battle. The Boers had occupied a formidable position on the northern bank of the Zand River in force, and intended to hold their ground. Their army extended over twenty miles and was commanded by the two Bothas. A frontal attack would have been fatal but the British, who had learnt the cost of direct attacks, turned both flanks, and the Boers broke off the action by a rapid

retirement. The official accounts of the engagement state that the Sussex Regiment distinguished itself by the dash with which it stormed an important kopje, but that fact is not to be learnt from Leachman's account of the fight.

The next day the regiment was within six miles of Kroonstadt, which was now the new headquarters of the Free State Government; but, to their great disappointment, and in spite of a forced march, the honour of capturing it fell to the 7th Division. The army advanced twenty miles on that day, and it was fully expected that the Boers would defend their new capital, but they abandoned the town which Lord Roberts entered at one o'clock on May 12. President Steyn, the two Bothas and the ever elusive de Wet escaped.

Lord Roberts halted for eight days at Kroonstadt while bridges were being repaired and fresh supplies collected. Then once more the army flowed over a vast plain covered with flocks and herds, which must have been a source of sore temptation to the hungry troops. At this time, however, the punishment for looting was very severe so that the odd chickens which found themselves in Leachman's cooking pot must have been most cunningly secured.

The Sussex entered Lindley on the 18th. It was thought that the Free Staters had transferred their capital to that small town, but such was not the case and the Sussex went forward to Heilbron.

"A pretty little place and we were able to get some supplies there. We expected to get a rest there but not a bit of it, off again next day. On 24th we crossed Roberts's force on the railway and marched to the Vaal which we crossed on the 26th. This meant more wading—we were very surprised at getting across without opposition." [The threats to the Boer

flanks had once more forced them to retire without offering serious resistance.] "Anyhow we had our fill on the 29th. I suppose there was a great deal about it in the papers. We seem to have done pretty well; at least Lord Roberts sent us a note to say that he was pleased. We marched until 2.0 p.m. without hearing a shot fired and then proceeded to march up a valley which the enemy was holding on the front and right. I can tell you the bullets did whizz about. There was no cover as the Boers had burnt all the grass (so that the khaki uniforms of our men might show up clearly against the black). After a bit I didn't mind the bullets though some hit the ground unpleasantly near. We advanced for about an hour by rushes and at 4.45 we charged the position. We found several dead Boers on the top mostly about 18 years old! We started the next morning at 4.0 a.m. and marched to Florida, a suburb of Johannesburg. It was certainly a case of the beggars coming to town. I never saw such a lot of ruffians. Few have proper soles to their boots, none hardly have seats to their breeches, many are wearing civilian trousers; we hadn't washed for two days and most of those two days had been spent grovelling on sooty black ground. Oh! we were a lot! Please note that we marched for 11 days without a rest at an average of twelve miles a day. Your beloved son is such a pretty boy at present. . . . I am very fit, fitter than I ever remember being. I am getting thinner so you can try to imagine my breadth. . . . We have done more marching than any other column, three hundred and thirty miles in thirty-four days including days of rest."

The rest of the army had encountered very little opposition, but it so happened that the formidable de Wet brothers held the centre in front of General Hamilton's Brigade and they were not the sort of men tamely to relinquish their country to an invader. They took every opportunity of hindering the advance and it was only the dash of Hunter's Brigade, and the brilliant turning movements made by the British, which forced the retirement of the other Boer forces on the wings and which prevented them inflicting greater damage on the swiftly moving British.

The march on Pretoria, therefore, became more geographical than tactical, and happily the final success was gained with comparatively small losses. The troops, however, although not knowing what was in their commander's mind or being able to visualize the vast extent of the field of operations, responded magnificently, and Leachman's graphic letters are alike a tribute to the officers and men and to the general who led them. On June 4 the column camped within five miles of Pretoria, through which it made a triumphal march next day, Lord Roberts taking the salute.

Previously, arrangements, which had been made for a meeting between the British General and General Botha, had broken down. The enemy were reported to be surrounded on the 9th but a parley failed to materialize. Leachman recorded in his diary that a big fight was expected the following day and that the enemy were reported to be "six thousand strong with twenty guns. What ho!" The fight indeed took place and a very severe one it was.

The battle of Diamond Hill was fought on June 11 and constituted three separate actions, the flanks and centre each fighting a battle of its own. After the capture of Pretoria General Botha had only

retreated fifteen miles, and he certainly could not be allowed to remain there, so Lord Roberts decided to attack him in force and either surround him or force his retreat with loss. The position General Botha had taken up was extremely strong. It was fifteen miles in extent, flanked by bastion-like hills which made it difficult to turn, and was held by men embittered by the loss of their capital and who, having witnessed the occupation of their farms and homesteads by an invading army, clung to their rocky heights with dogged despair.

On June 9 the cavalry under French, who attacked one wing, was opposed to so strong a resistance that he was hard put to it to hold his own, far less evict the enemy. General Hamilton attacked the other wing and was so severely handled that, for a time, the fight seemed to be going against him, and there was a critical moment when he was in great danger of being outflanked by the Heidleberg Commando, a *corps d'élite* of the Boers. With cool judgment he parried the threat and on the afternoon of the 12th the Sussex, Derbyshires and C.I.V. with brilliant dash won a position on a strongly held ridge on the enemy's flanks and here they clung with the greatest tenacity and courage, although enfiladed by a Vickers maxim and exposed to a raging storm of shrapnel. It was some time before they could get artillery support. This was finally forthcoming from the 82nd Battery, which Major Conolly with audacious bravery brought right into the firing line, and a critical day turned in favour of the British. That night Botha retreated.

Leachman's letters say practically nothing about the battle and suggest that it could all be read of in the papers, and we are left wondering what effects so fiery an ordeal had upon his mind. Indeed it is very strange to note the reluctance with which he mentions

or describes any severe ordeal through which he has passed. He will tell of a grimly amusing incident, or write of the lack of food, or water to wash in, but when he experiences personal danger he remains practically dumb.

On June 16 they were back in Pretoria. On the 19th they were off again and on this day "had rather a nasty experience. We drank a lot of water when we got in, we very seldom do, but it had been a very hot day and we could not wait for tea to be boiled . . . six putrid mules were found about half a mile above our watering place lying in the stream. Everybody thought they were going to get enteric but nobody has as yet." Two lines about the battle of Diamond Hill, half a page about six dead mules !

For five consecutive days till the 23rd the column marched fifteen miles a day, trying to locate a force of two thousand Boers near Heidleberg. When they were found they were shelled with "cow guns" and decamped during the night.

The weary troops marched into Heidleberg next day, when Leachman, instead of passing a night under a roof and in a comfortable bed as he had hoped, "spent a miserable night on a height like the spire of a church" on picquet duty.

The following day, however, he had lunch and dinner at the railway buffet and "Oh ! it was nice to sit at a table with a clean cloth ; and not the least nice thing, too, was the draught beer." Incidentally, this letter was written on a Dutch railway goods traffic form. Indeed the "note-paper" he used at different times makes a wonderful assortment and almost provides a record of his movements in itself.

General Hunter now took over command of the Brigade from General Hamilton who had broken a collar-bone, and the dreary process of marching and counter-marching commenced all over again.

Moddersfontein, Bierlaagte, Villiersdorp, Frankfort, Reitfontein, Graskop and Reitz—a hundred miles in eleven days. "I shall be glad when we come to anchor," Leachman wrote, "anyone would get sick of the amount of marching we have to do," yet he was wonderfully fit and in splendid spirits. On July 12 he had a slight change.

"I and five other officers have been living in a rather nice house, which a Dutch woman lent me, so that it would not be looted; it was so funny to sleep on a mattress again after so long. We have had a tremendous lot of arms given in here (Reitz) but I am sure lots of the Boers don't give in their proper rifles, as we get a lot of ancient weapons and guns."

From July 12 to July 23 when the regiment rejoined General Hunter's column, from which it had been temporarily separated, the Sussex had moved to Bethlehem in the midst of its tremendous hills. From there in company with the 21st Battery they had marched to Sevastopol in order to join Ridley's brigade of mounted infantry. The net was gradually closing round the Boers when de Wet broke through and escaped; but the others were still within.

At length on July 23 they were brought to bay at Retief's Nek. The British guns commanded every opening in the hills and British columns had occupied every surrounding height. The Highland Brigade had established itself in such a manner as to command the Boer position and the Seaforths and Sussex had captured the position in front of them after receiving considerable punishment. Finally the Boers surrendered on July 29. Leachman, however, had not had the satisfaction of seeing them throw down their arms, for he had been severely wounded at Retief's Nek on July 23. It was first stated by

the War Office that the wound was slight, but it was later classified as severe, and severe it was, as it had seriously injured the sciatic nerve. A few days later Leachman wired himself "Going strong," and on the 27th he wrote as follows :

" We marched till 10 a.m. when we came in sight of Hunter's force and the Highland Brigade. About twelve we advanced against a hill and three companies went up a pass to get on its flank. Well, we were going up quite merrily, and when we had got within 1,400 yards of the head of the pass the Boers opened fire. My company was second company. Up one side of the pass there was a certain amount of cover and we advanced under this till within 400 yards of the position. I fired 56 rounds and ran out of ammunition. This was about 4 p.m. An officer came up to me behind a rock and gave me a note to take forward to the leading company with orders to retire at dusk. I ran forward about forty yards and just as I got into cover again a bullet hit me on the thigh. I managed to get behind a stone. Luckily there was a man behind it and between us we managed to bandage up the wound, it hurt horribly. I precious nearly fainted. At dark four men carried me back about half a mile and then a stretcher came up and I proceeded on that to camp about two miles ; it fairly gave me gip."

The losses of the Sussex in this action were three men killed and four officers and thirty-one men wounded. The girls' school at Bethlehem served as a temporary hospital for Leachman. It was there found that the bullet had entered his thigh four inches above the knee and avoiding the bone had

come out in such a way as to make sitting extremely uncomfortable.

He was then transferred by ox-wagon to Wynberg, which was reached on August 13 :

“ I can safely say that this was the worst experience I have ever had. My wound had nothing like healed and every jar of the wagon (i.e., every ten seconds) hurt me awfully. . . . We were put in a very nice hospital and got something to eat at last, for we were absolutely starved coming along. . . . On 16th, we were shot into No. 4 hospital train and started off for Deelfontein. . . . Two miserable days. It gave me an awful shock when, on asking an orderly what ward I was to go to he said, ‘ Oh ! go to H——1 ! ’ It turned out he meant ‘ L ’ Ward. . . . You get everything free up to champagne and cigars. But the great attraction is the nurses.”

On August 27 he was at Wynberg with every prospect of being sent home, and on September 15, no longer a raw recruit but already a seasoned soldier, having celebrated his twentieth birthday in a field hospital at Bethlehem, embarked at Cape Town on the *Kildonian Castle* for England.

CHAPTER IV

A VETERAN OF TWENTY

FOR two months Leachman remained in England recovering from his wound, and on the last day of 1900 he bade farewell to his father at Southampton, sailing on that day on the S.S. *Oratava* for the Cape.

A change had now come over the aspect of the war ; not only in a military sense, but in the temper in which it was fought.

The measures of clemency adopted by Lord Roberts had met with scant response from the Boers who, far from showing themselves conciliated, adopted a policy of guerilla warfare which was the more exasperating to the British in that it was often accompanied by tactics which were the reverse of the chivalrous attitude hitherto displayed by us in all our dealings with the enemy. Hence a bitterness crept into the struggle that had hitherto been absent, and the war was pursued with the greatest keenness on both sides.

In December de Wet with a strong commando had headed south in an attempt to reach Cape Colony, where the political situation was particularly dangerous, in order to raise the Colony in the British rear ; in this he was frustrated and driven back on December 13 to his old district north of Thabanchu. de la Rey in the north was equally active and elusive and the year 1900 closed on a British army, split up into small garrisons holding important posts, and a number of columns marching and counter-marching to all points of the compass ; sometimes fighting a

short and bloody action, but more often trudging endless miles for weeks on end in an attempt to corner one of their opponents.

This was the situation when Leachman landed in South Africa for the second time on January 18, 1901.

He was now a seasoned soldier with the scars of a battle wound to show for his apprenticeship ; consequently he had been continually asked questions by those going out to South Africa for the first time. " Someone is always coming up and asking me some foolish question as to what they have to do when they get to Cape Town ; if I can't think of the right answer I generally manage to compose some sage pieces of advice."

On January 21 Leachman left by train to rejoin his regiment, brigaded with the Derbyshires and Camerons, still under General Bruce Hamilton's command, at Kroonstadt, which he reached on the 25th.

The regiment left by train for Ventersburg Road to join in chasing de Wet, who, having replaced the losses in men, guns and horses he had sustained in his previous abortive endeavour to reach Cape Colony, now made another attempt to reach his objective. Had he succeeded, a wholesale rising of the Dutch would have resulted inevitably. It was of vital necessity that he should be headed back. The task before the British was difficult in the extreme ; de Wet's intimate knowledge of the country over which he travelled, his extreme mobility, and the fact that he could turn and twist at will and replenish his supplies of food and horses, gave him a tremendous advantage. The weather, which was very bad, favoured him and made the pursuit arduous in the extreme. One account of the war makes the following comments on the work of Bruce Hamilton's Brigade during the course of these operations :

"Of all the British detachments the two which worked hardest and marched farthest during this period of the war were the 21st Brigade (Derbyshires, Sussex and Camerons) under General Bruce Hamilton and the column under Settle which operated down the western border of the Orange River Colony; much hard and disagreeable work, far more repugnant to the soldiers than the actual dangers of war, fell to the lot of Bruce Hamilton and his men."

With Kroonstadt as their centre they were continually working through the dangerous Lindley and Heilbron districts, returning to the railway line only to start again immediately on a fresh quest.

Leachman on rejoining his regiment was placed in command of a company, as he supposed temporarily. The fact, however, that he was placed in command if only temporarily, of a company which must often act independently, shows that he was considered, although so young, a capable officer and equal to responsibilities which were considerable.

On February 1 he wrote from Bethulie :

"We have had a time since I last wrote, that was on Saturday, January 25, I think. Well, we left Ventersberg Road Station at 5 a.m. and marched about 12 miles to Ventersberg where de Wet was supposed to be. At 5.0 p.m. we found he had left so we stopped for two hours and then started for the Zand (River) at 7.30 at night. It started raining and we all got drenched and at midnight found we had lost our way so stopped at 4.0 a.m. and then got into camp at ten o'clock. Of course de Wet had gone so we marched to Smaldeel next day and then entrained and reached here yesterday. We are going to try to cut him off. The heat is

dreadful and the men have great difficulty in keeping up . . . the country seems in a very unsettled state and we get sniped at wherever we go."

Bethulie is 140 miles south of Smaldeel, so they were trying by rail to get ahead of the slower moving de Wet. In order to add to the mobility of the column a hundred men of the Sussex were converted into mounted infantry. Leachman, who was a good and keen rider, volunteered to assist Captain Harden in training them, and his offer was accepted. This provided him with his first opportunity for showing his initiative and of displaying that keenness he possessed in breaking away from the normal, which he never lost an opportunity of doing. The result was that he soon had an occasion for acting independently, being ordered to take out a convoy to Bruce Hamilton. "So we pegged along and were lucky not to meet any Boers." He continued his letter on the 14th :

"On 19th at three in the afternoon we left Bethulie and went about 10 miles and joined Hamilton's force.. Next day we went 21 miles to Prier's Siding, next day 27 miles to Philipopolis and the next 20 miles to Zand Drift on the Orange River. We were only twenty-four hours behind de Wet but we are taking a long time to get across the river as the water is up to the horses' shoulders."

It will be noticed that de Wet had again broken through the chain of British columns and was now half-way to the Cape.

Leachman was loving the new work in spite of its arduous nature, and, since he had been riding, his opinion of the country had been rising considerably.

From Zand Drift they marched sixty miles to De Aar junction which was reached on the 17th and left on the 18th. On the 27th he wrote, this time from Paun Pan :

" Still on the track, you see ; my goodness, we have been marching ! We left there (De Aar) on the 18th, I think, and reached Britstown, which is a very pretty little place, on the 20th. We started off next day but, as I had a bit of fever I travelled in an ambulance and stayed in it till Saturday. We reached Strydenberg on the 24th, having marched 200 miles in four days, with one march of 27 miles. We left there the next day and reached this place yesterday. I have nearly recovered from my go of fever ; I still feel it a bit but it does not affect me as I always ride. Our horses are very much done, our men don't understand much about them, so give us a lot of trouble. When I get in after a twenty-five miles' march I have to spend a couple of hours seeing the horses watered and fed. Oh, I can tell you, mounted infantry is not all jam."

It is interesting to observe how the young officer already displayed that grit he later developed to almost an unbreakable degree, and that his first care was for his horses, in spite of his own fatigue, comes as no surprise. It was his invariable custom throughout his life to tend to the wants of those who served him, human or animal, before considering his own. After a long and tiring journey he would first see that his servant or chauffeur was supplied with refreshment before he would sit down to his own meal ; indeed he would frequently deprive himself of food so that his servants might not want. He had the instincts of a true soldier who knows that, to get

the best out of the instruments he uses, they must be tended with care and treated with consideration whenever circumstances permit.

The letter Leachman wrote from Paun Pan marked the end of de Wet's second attempt to reach Cape Colony. He had not, it is true, been captured but neither had he reached his objective, although he had twice broken through between the British columns then closing in on him, while other troops were moving rapidly up from the south to complete his encirclement. Then he broke back to his lair in the north, in the district round Heilbron, having gained nothing, but with the loss of all his guns, four thousand horses, all his convoy and some three hundred of his men.

By now all thoughts of leniency had been dispensed with and it was determined to prosecute the campaign with the utmost rigour. Whole districts were cleared of everything which might be of use to the Boer bands. Horses, sheep and cattle were driven off; farmsteads were burnt, and, lest illegitimate pressure might be exercised by the irreconcilable elements on those Boers who desired peace, and they composed the vast majority, they, together with their wives and families, were removed and placed in huge concentration camps far removed from the scene of operations.

Such was the grim necessity of war forced on the British by the senseless continuation of the struggle; such was the school in which young Leachman was instructed. He was now to assist in laying waste the country, in removing from it every living creature and in burning the homes where treachery had lurked.

On March 23 he was back again in Bloemfontein, under more or less civilized conditions, having had another long trek since his previous letter.

"We left Edenburg on Wednesday 13th, with a convoy of 180 wagons for de Wetsdorp. We had quite a nice little skirmish one day. I was the advanced guard and had a great gallop after the Boers who held a ridge against us for a bit . . . we laid waste all the country round de Wetsdorp as it is a great stronghold of the Boers. We have burnt all the farms and taken all the cattle and everything we could lay hands on. We left de Wetsdorp on Monday with a hundred empty ox-wagons, three hundred refugees, 80,000 sheep, 7,000 horses and 17,000 cattle, you can imagine the length of the column. We had a skirmish every day except the day we got into Bloemfontein. We had two men captured within eight hundred yards of the column by Boers in khaki. . . ." (pretending, of course, to be British).

"Bennet Burleigh, the war correspondent, came to breakfast this morning and took a lot of notes about the regiment so we expect a lot of trumpeting in the *Daily Telegraph*."

On April 4 he wrote from Bethulie giving an account of further treks :

"I wrote last from Bloemfontein. Well, on March 25 we entrained for Springfontein with a convoy for Smithfield. We had sniping every day and a few horses killed. We reached Smithfield on 30th. It is a pretty place in a tremendous hole in the hills. It is quite laid waste and there are only one or two people in the town. We left next day and marched to Bethulie which we reached yesterday. We came under a very heavy fire one day ; I was burning a house full of wheat and had a picket out, when the Boers opened fire at long range

and killed eleven horses, but luckily hit no men. It was a bit hard to know what to do at first, but I sent for the gun and they soon cleared "

Thence they trekked back to Bloemfontein and the following day were once more on the move, back to Edenburg, from which place he wrote on April 11 :

" We have just come in from a long trek and go out again at once. We left Bethulie on Thursday 4th, and marched back to Smithfield. We started from there for this place on the 14th. We had a lot of sniping every day. I had an awful narrow squeak one day. I was some way away on the left flank and they started firing on the advanced guard some way away. I got off my horse and stood looking through my glasses for the Boers. At this moment a thunderstorm came on and I was taking off my cape, when a bullet came just at my feet and then a lot more all round. I told the men to ride for it, and as I had not time to mount I ran for it about four hundred yards at racing speed. I wasn't five hundred yards from them when they fired; that was the closest shave I have had since I was wounded."

Yet his first thought was for the safety of his men, and this little incident is the forerunner of many others, where he counted his own safety as of no account if others might escape injury or death.

By April 20, after another hard trek and a brush with the Boers, he was back at Edenburg, where he raised another company of mounted infantry, and was appointed adjutant and quartermaster of a mounted infantry detachment of five companies.

A march of forty-three miles on April 13 brought

them to de Wetsdorf which was cleared of all its inhabitants.

"It was very queer to see a fair-sized town *without anybody in it*," he wrote. "Back to Edenburg on the 18th, picking up on the way, in conjunction with Munro's column, a hundred and fifty wagons, eighty prisoners and many refugees. On the 20th Edenburg was left again. Since when we have had a rather exciting time. We left with five hundred yeomanry just out from home; they were a shocking lot and couldn't be got to go up the kopjes if there was any chance of there being Boers on the top. One day a squadron of theirs got into a hole. We went and got them out. I was fifteen hours in the saddle. . . . The next day two more of them got wounded when they were looting."

Smithfield was cleared of all its inhabitants on the 24th, and the column reached Aliwal North, escorting 20 prisoners, 800 refugees, 8,000 cattle and 60,000 sheep. "The country round here is simply teeming with Boers and they are much bolder than in most places. . . . We passed through Rouxville yesterday which is a little town—there was not a living thing in it of any sort."

CHAPTER V

VARYING TASKS

LEACHMAN'S good work and keenness brought increased responsibility to him, for, although sometimes sick, he was never sorry and, if tired, he still had that extra bit of vitality to draw on and could continue when most others were at the end of their strength. As is always the case, the willing horse carries a full load, as we learn from his letter of May 8 from Aliwal North.

"Now I am a busy man and really have not a minute to myself, I am adjutant, quartermaster and transport officer; in fact a staff officer to the column. I hope to get 5s. a day extra and I think I probably shall. Well, that is worth a good bit of extra work."

This last remark is very characteristic of him. He hated to feel that he was not giving full value for the trust placed in him or the salary he was earning. So conscientious was he in this respect that he nearly always exceeded what duty demanded and took far more out of himself than the most exacting could have expected, with the inevitable result that he had several breakdowns in health, in spite of which he seldom left his post.

On May 16, Leachman obtained promotion, due to Captain Montgomery leaving to join the South African Constabulary. "I am awfully sorry," he wrote, "as he is a ripping good chap and a great pal

of mine. Major Cardew I see a good deal of. He is a very amusing man. . . .”

The weather was now bitterly cold with chilly winds of hurricane force which continued for some time, for he wrote on June 1 :

“ The weather is too awful for anything with cold and terrible blizzards, there seems no chance of getting away from this beastly country. I have been very seedy this last week. We left Rouxville on the 21st, and soon after I got a sharp go of fever which has only just gone, and now I have jaundice, a thing I never remember having before.”

But in spite of ill-health, the opportunity of more interesting work prevented him from giving in, the more so as there was a prospect of his seeing more fighting, for almost in the same breath he continued :

“ I should go for a bit of leave but du Moulin has got a fighting column and I am going to be his staff officer for a bit, and I don't want to miss that.”

A new method was now being employed to round up the Boers: long lines of block-houses joined together with cordons of barbed wire stretched from kopje to kopje over miles of country—a formidable barrier for the scattered bodies of the enemy to break through. Against this wall of wire and machine guns the British column relentlessly swept the scattered bands of their stubborn opponents, but it was a slow and arduous process. Feeling the net of marching men drawing closer and closer, aware of that sinister wall in front of them, the Boers would split up into small parties and endeavour to break through between the columns; but although many succeeded in doing so others were caught in the

trap, and each drive added to the number of prisoners, while immense herds of stock were gathered in and thousands of tons of grain destroyed.

Leachman, whose grit had earned him his reward, had obtained the appointment he so much desired and now, his good spirits quite restored, he regarded the whole business as a sport. On June 16 he wrote to his brother-in-law, a keen sportsman, at whose house he loved to stay to shoot or hunt :

“ I am holding now a high official position, being Acting Staff Officer to Col. du Moulin, while the S.O. is away on a month's leave. He is a ripping chap ; his name is Campbell and he rode 'The Roarer' in the Grand National and won after betting a thousand pounds at 66 to 1. By Jove, I wish I could do a thing like that ; he says he has often ridden for Maj. Edwards in the Grand Military. Our last trek has been great fun and we did jolly well too, getting fifty-three prisoners. It was just like a big pheasant drive, as ten columns started and drove the Boers up north to a line of posts about fifty miles long ; the majority of the Boers broke back, but the total bag amounted to about two hundred and thirty. The part we were driving had not been harried much before, so we found an immense amount of stock. We alone brought in 20,000 sheep, 5,000 cattle and 500 horses, so what all the columns together must have brought in I can't think. The horses are awfully wild as I know to my cost ; about a fortnight ago I lost two of my three ponies and I tried to get another out of the wild ones. I put a nigger on his back to begin with and he stuck on pretty well (they do on anything). I then got up. He didn't get me off, but ran away with me

and ran into a cart and got the pole right into his side and pitched me miles. I had to shoot him and I have not tried another yet. My other pony I have had since January 26, and is a ripping grey mare; she never gets tired but gets inflammation of the feet sometimes from cantering over rocks."

Every ruse and artifice to inflict loss and hurt was employed by both sides, by the British to end the conflict and by the Boers in a gallant but fruitless attempt to retrieve their fallen fortunes. From now onwards until the termination of the war no major actions were fought, but countless minor actions, skirmishes and ambuscades took place over the vast theatre of operations.

Leachman has described how thirty men and an officer were left concealed in a farm, on the chance that it might be visited by the owner and his friends. The ruse succeeded up to a point. Thirty Boers rode up to the farm and two were promptly shot dead, but when the garrison wished to depart they found that they were surrounded in their turn and were only extricated with the greatest difficulty. On one occasion, Langston with seven men was surprised at a farm, losing three men killed before the remainder were captured. He has told how, with twelve men, he himself was lured into a kloof by two Boers and was suddenly attacked by seventy others lying in ambush, three hundred yards away. "Got away all right, could do nothing," he remarks. He tells of the false alarms—of the tedious days when not a shot was fired and not a single Boer seen—then after a long interval there is a letter from him despatched by native runner from the Basutoland frontier at Wepener, for the Boers, harried and desperate, tried to escape into the wilds of that

country ; but they were intercepted and turned back and, being pursued, put up a sharp running fight the following day.

After an expedition to the Basutoland frontier to round up some stray enemy columns, Leachman returned to Edenburg having been absent for thirty-one days. After two days' leave in Bloemfontein, where he rejoined his Colonel (du Moulin), he was then sent to Norval's Port to make arrangements for enlisting native boys for intelligence work with his column. This is the first occasion on which we hear of him being connected with this kind of work ; later he became renowned for the manner in which he organized his own intelligence service, and for the speed and the accuracy of the information he received from every quarter of Mesopotamia and the Western Desert.

The added work and responsibilities and the increased pay added a zest to Leachman's life in the field, in spite of its inevitable tedium ; he even contemplated remaining in the country when his regiment should go to India at the end of the war.

It will be noticed throughout his life how necessary a stimulant to his nature was strenuous work. Even at this early age his restless nature chafed at inaction, indeed his spirits rose and fell in accordance with the manner in which his mind and body were employed.

On July 27 he was back in Philippopolis, where he spent his twenty-first birthday, regretting that he could not spend it at home.

There follows a long gap in his correspondence, due principally to the fact that his column had been operating away from the railway and was out of touch with normal communication.

He wrote once more from Philippopolis where he had been staying for a week in a lovely house, beautifully furnished ; but the furniture had been

looted from unoccupied houses, since the town was completely denuded of its inhabitants. In addition to the furniture, he found

“ a gasogene apparatus with powders to it which greatly improves one's whisky. I have come to the conclusion that I am breaking up. A few days ago I developed a boil on my cheek that became so huge that the doctor had to cut it open ; from what he said, I thought it would spoil my beauty for ever, but now he says that it will only leave a small scar. Then yesterday I was jumping over a wall and I fell on a stone and ricked my ankle awfully badly ; the consequence is that I can't put my foot to the ground. Oh ! I tell you I am in a bad way. By the by, I asked the doctor what caused my boil and he told me it was from drinking too much beer, so Bernard [his brother-in-law] had better look out.”

There appeared to be a hope that the end of the war was in sight, but it was ill-founded, in spite of the fact that the burghers were coming in fast, but Leachman was quick to appreciate the real cause of the useless prolongation of the war, namely, “ the Cape rebels and others who are afraid of their necks,” desperate men, who, having broken their allegiance to England, now feared the retribution in store for them. If brought to bay, which was seldom, they fought with the courage of despair and with a ruthless disregard for the ethics of war ; if they succeeded in escaping they hid in fastnesses known only to themselves, whence they would prowl over the country, scouring it for such remnants of supplies as might have been overlooked by the troops, or waylaying a too careless patrol. They seldom left their hiding-places in the day, so that as Leachman

states in his letter of August 26 from Ventershoek :

“ The columns only moved out at night in any attempt to surprise them. The big mob of Boers seems to have hidden itself very effectually, but I expect the next thing we shall hear of them will be that they have snaffled a patrol or something. . . . There is a rumour that no one is to leave the country for nine months. I shan't mind as I am quite content to stay here . . . the weather is too awful for words, thunderstorm after thunderstorm all day long. The place we are camped in seems to attract lightning for we had four horses killed in one storm yesterday, all in different parts of the camp.”

Although the fighting grew less the hardships for the troops remained ; night and day they had to be prepared for sudden action, and marched weary miles for small results. Yet Leachman seemed never to tire, and any suggestion of ending the war by compromise was repugnant to him. “ It is sickening,” he writes on November 11, “ the way the papers go on about the length of the war. I don't see what it matters to them, I think it is our place to grumble, not theirs.” Nor did he believe in a short cut in the training of an individual for war for, in the same letter, he said, “ We have had a lot of new subalterns join us lately ; one got a direct commission from Marlborough College, I call it disgusting.” Indeed he had a hatred of inefficiency and nothing made him more angry than that anyone should hold a position by anything other than merit. Besides, inefficiency in the training of an officer might well lead to the unnecessary loss of his men's lives. There were still dangers to be found, hard work to be done and situations to meet which called for experience, or at least careful tuition, as his letters clearly show.

The approach of Christmas brought no respite for the war-worn, weary troops and the jaded horses. Writing from Ventershoek on December 18 Leachman has left a vivid account of the hardships they were undergoing :

“ My dear Mother, I have not written for some time, I am afraid, but we have been trekking furiously. We left here on November 28 to operate against a mob of Boers coming south. We got into them all right and killed three of them, including a veldt cornet, but they killed two of our men and wounded two more. We had a great chase after the Boers and trekked ninety-three miles in seventy-three hours including halts. When we finished up, we found ourselves right down south near Springfontein, and had a couple of days' rest by the side of a river where there was beautiful bathing . . . there are a lot of stories about that this column is going to be broken up ; if so it means that we are leaving the country ; I think that three months will see us out of it. If we aren't on our way to India by March, it will mean that we shall have to wait till next trooping season which begins in September. . . . I must try and get a run up to Bloemfontein soon as my clothes are in a shocking state.”

He wrote again from Jagersfontein on December 27 :

“ I am afraid I have written no letter for a long time, but we have been very busy. We left Ventershoek and went into Edenburg and then I and the colonel went up to Bloemfontein and had a couple of nice days there.

“ I nearly ruined myself buying clothes as I

was simply in rags. We left Edenburg on the 23rd and marched to Jagersfontein Road. We started on a night march on the evening of the 23rd and, after marching 25 miles, surprised a lager at dawn, capturing twenty-eight prisoners besides all their blankets, horses, rifles, etc. We had rather a sharp skirmish but had only two men wounded. Every one was awfully pleased, as we have had bad luck lately. You can't think how it has bucked us all up, we were getting so fed up before. We captured among the prisoners a Boer dressed in khaki from head to foot, whom we shot after trying him by court-martial. On Christmas Day we marched to Fauresmith, which is a ripping little town with lovely fruit in it, figs, apricots, plums, apples and mulberries. We have put off our Christmas dinner until such time as we get to the line, as it is hardly safe to enjoy oneself on the veldt, particularly as the Boers think every British soldier gets drunk at Christmas time. On Boxing Day we moved to this place, and had a good day going over the diamond mines. This is the only place I have come across where there is any loot. I found in one of the houses a set of pictures—'The Day of Reckoning' and 'A Gambler's Wife.' I expect you know them. Bernard has some of them at Mornington, only mine are very big pictures and his are very small ones."

And so, while he was still at Vlakfontein, 1901 passed into 1902, and the struggle still continued in the same guerilla fashion.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN

THE opening month of the new year was little different to that of the old. Successive days of long and heavy marching were made more exhausting by periods of torrential rain, followed by spells of overbearing heat. Nor did such laborious toil appear to afford any compensation to the weary troops. A Boer killed here, and three captured there, as the only result of many days of hard trekking seemed to the tattered foot-sore column but a poor reward for its toil, nor did these petty skirmishes appear to hold out any hopes that this senseless struggle could be terminated.

In the first twenty-seven days of January Leachman's column traversed three hundred and thirty miles of country, visiting in turn Platburg, Wolkraal, Wittleport, Belmont, Luckoff, Fauresmith and Jagersfontein, and then, to show how unrelaxing the vigilance of the troops had to be, how unrelaxing their warlike precautions, the Boers struck in no uncertain manner, for on January 28, when the column had camped for the night at Abrahamskraal, and, at an hour when slumber was deepest, it suffered a grievous loss, and narrowly escaped total disaster. Writing from Vlaksfontein on February 2, Leachman described what happened on that night :

“ Just a line to say I am very flourishing but suffering from too much work. I suppose you saw in the papers of the death of Colonel du

Moulin. It was a dreadful thing, the Boers got right into our camp and we had a very close shave of all being scuppered. It was the very worst experience I have had in the war. We were woken up by the bullets coming all around us, firing at about thirty yards' range, and during the whole of the fight I was dressed in a pair of pyjamas and had no shoes on, so you can imagine the state of my feet the next day. The Colonel's death was one of the worst things that could have happened for me, as he was very good to me and would have given me a helping hand through the service. We got five weeks' mail at one time yesterday ; it was rather trying as one could not digest all the news at once."

The Boers were repulsed after a bitter struggle and after inflicting a loss on the Sussex Regiment of eleven killed, including Colonel du Moulin—his son, sixteen years later, was to fall at the head of the same regiment in the last week of the Great War—and in addition to the killed the losses included six wounded. The proportion of the killed to the wounded is sufficient testimony of the closeness of the fighting. After the action the column marched fifty-four miles back to Vlakfontein.

It would be interesting to know more concerning this struggle in the naked dawn. To know how the Boers dealt with the sentries, how they were repulsed and what their losses were ; but Leachman snaps off his letter like the action itself, leaving us to imagine the first confusion, the swishing hail of bullets, the crackle of musketry, the leadership of the officers and the discipline of the men which saved the column from extinction in that grim struggle. He ended his letter by writing that there was no chance of the regiment leaving the country before October

since a draft of a hundred and thirty men from the battalion was just being despatched from India in exchange for a similar number from the battalion in South Africa. The authorities evidently did not contemplate an early cessation of hostilities.

The South African War was the most strange conflict in the history of war. After fighting as a European army on orthodox lines and utterly defeating the enemy forces in the field, the strange spectacle was seen of the British Army becoming more like its opponent in the queer tactics employed. Except for the uniforms there was now so little to distinguish the opposing forces that it was sometimes difficult to distinguish friend from foe and on more than one occasion each took another party of its own people for the enemy. A town or village would be occupied on one day by the British and a few days later by the Boers, and a bed in a farm house would be slept in on successive nights by one of the belligerents in turn. The British had now dispensed with all the unsentential paraphernalia of a trained army. They seldom had artillery; it was too slow moving. They abandoned tents as they betrayed the presence of the troops, and a large number of mounted infantry now rode the same hardy ponies and moved almost as rapidly as the Boers themselves, while the ox-wagon became a common medium of transport. Leachman's letters provide a splendid historical record of the conditions which now prevailed and give a better insight into his character than any of his later correspondence. One cannot but be struck by the extraordinary maturity of one in reality so young; his judgment was sound, his appreciation of the military situations correct—as the actual events showed later—and he held positions of responsibility given usually to men much older—and yet the boyishness which made him so popular and which

he kept till his death, was displayed with gusto whenever the occasion permitted. His sense of humour never deserted him, even if at times a trifle grim. On February 20 he wrote from Vlakkfontein :

“ I am afraid I have nothing very exciting to write about as we have not been doing much lately. We have just come back from a twelve days' trek looking for Boers, but we didn't see a sign of one the whole time. We were travelling very light and as it rained every night we did not have a very comfortable time of it. Of course we never carry tents, as the only chance we have of catching Boers is by concealing our camps and making raids from them and one can't do that if one has tents. . . . There are very few columns down this way so we move about daily expecting to be attacked, especially as we have a very weak column now. We have just sent away a draft of a hundred and forty men to India and a like number are being sent from India to join us. I think it an excellent thing as a little new blood is wanted badly in the regiment. . . . I see we have just had four gentlemen cadets appointed to us, we are all very pleased as they are generally a much better class of fellow than the militiamen. We have been having awfully good buck shooting lately, there are hundreds of them about here and they are fairly tame and give us good shots. . . . The heat and the flies are something awful out here, and it amuses me when you people write and say ' How nice it must be, having warm weather.' We had a hailstorm here the other day in which the hailstones broke the windows of the house in which we put up and killed a lot of mules and horses. . . . I am in great trouble now about

servants (as you might say)—my boy whom I have had for about a year has just left me to go to Basutoland and I can't get another as they are very scarce. These natives are the most wonderful people in the world to work. Perhaps we would trek all night and when we get into camp everyone goes to sleep, but the boys will cook or mend their wagons and when they have nothing else to do they will sit around a fire talking all at once. We have just heard that we are going to move our quarters to a new district. I expect that you will hear of me in a very different place, but I can't tell you for fear this letter gets mislaid. Well, I must stop this babble."

His appreciation of the native was significant. For what he considered the right and manly type he had the greatest admiration and sympathy; he was quick to understand their mentality, and an extraordinary bond of understanding quickly grew between master and servant. The fact that his boy remained with him under such trying conditions for over a year and the keen regret Leachman displayed at his loss, showed what was indeed the case, that his nature and character were particularly well suited for his dealings with the Oriental, and he quickly earned not only their respect but their deep affection.

The new district to which he referred was evidently Commando Drift twenty miles N.E. of Hoopstad, for he wrote to his mother from there on March 19 :

" I am afraid it is a very long time since I last wrote to you but we have been continuously on the trek since February 20. . . . You know this column is under command of Major Gilbert of our's. "

" I am now doing Staff Officer to him. . . . We reached Boshof on February 26, where we were joined on to Driscoll's Scouts as we were not strong enough to work alone. We started north on the 28th and immediately got into a country simply swarming with Boers and good fighters too—we had skirmishes with two hundred odd Boers on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th. The last date the Boers had concentrated and had about six hundred men. On the 6th we marched all night and at dawn there were Boers all round us ; a few of our men went out and got chased back and the Boers started sniping our camp, so not thinking this good enough we all marched out against them, our strength being about six hundred men and a pom-pom. We were soon brought up short by a ridge held by three hundred Boers. We had to take it, so a hundred and twenty of Driscoll's Scouts and about eighty of our men got ready to charge it. The ridge was about two miles long and there were two hundred Boers at one end and a hundred at the other, and none in the centre, so we thought we would go for the centre. We had about eight hundred yards to ride to the ridge and the Boers held their fire until we were about three hundred yards off and then they let us have it proper. We managed to keep going and when we got to the ridge the hundred Boers went but the two hundred took us in the rear and we had a rare time of it. At last we beat them off and finished off a day by taking up a strong position. We only lost one killed and six wounded and many horses shot, which everyone considers was a marvellously small loss considering the fire. . . . On the 10th we had another little excitement. Ourselves and

Driscoll's with about four hundred men left our baggage with another column and moved off for a couple of days with very little baggage. After moving all night as usual we were awoken in the morning by masses of mounted men galloping into the camp—we started plugging and, after killing a horse we discovered that the attackers were S.A.C. (South African Constabulary) who had taken our camp for a Boer laager and had meant to take it. We arrived at Hoopstad on the 11th and marched on again the same night as it was reported that de la Rey with a vast number of men and guns was trying to cross the Vaal to join de Wet. We are now holding one of the drifts on the Vaal and are enjoying our rest. We have absolutely run out of stores and clothes, but as this country is very well stocked with pigs and chickens, we don't do ourselves so badly. It rains all day and all night, but I am getting into a state that I don't mind if I am wet or dry, as one never feels any ill effects from it. By the bye, I must tell you a little incident that happened to us. During our wanderings down south we one night determined to raid the town of Fauresmith. We surrounded the town about 2.0 a.m. (by the way there are no people in it) and there a select body of men proceeded into the town to search it. We marched into the first house and a man went into a room and then came creeping out and said there was a man in bed so three or four of us went in and there he was sure enough wrapped up in a blanket. We shouted 'hands up,' and straightway the man jumped up at us and knocked one of us down; we plugged at him and then discovered that the man was a baboon which had been taking a nap in the

house. We were fairly sold. Our present camp is right on the banks of the Vaal, which is a very fine river at this point. We spend most of our time fishing but I don't think anyone catches much. I am very fit and am glad to say it is getting colder."

In his diary of the same date is a note to say that he swam across the river and back.

As usual throughout this interesting letter, the personal element is shrouded in the background of Leachman's narrative. He never detaches himself from his associates: "*We* did this or that," he writes, he never states what part he himself took in the various actions described unless it is to say that he was hungry, tired or dirty or very much afraid. His letters only show us how matter of fact he was, how apparently commonplace his own participation in the events narrated, yet we know from other sources that from the outset he earned the reputation of being a born leader, and gained the highest regard of those far senior to him in rank. We are also told that he was in the forefront in every attack. Unconsciously here and there a little of the truth reveals itself even in trivial things, such, for instance, as when describing the raiding of the town of Fauresmith "a picked body" of men was selected to carry out the raid—he was one of them—or when he swam a swiftly flowing river flooded by the heavy rains. But though we may wonder what he was doing on the other side, we are left in doubt, just as, years later, we are left ignorant of the details of how he nearly lost his life in the Tigris during the siege of Kut. It is left to others to tell us that the Vaal was in spate and that the feat was a dangerous one.

While Leachman's column was being employed

in the manner he has described the activities of that splendid Boer leader, de la Rey, were causing no little anxiety. He had concentrated under his command every man or boy he could gather in from all sides of the Transvaal and was now prepared to make a desperate attempt to strike south and join de Wet.

The British therefore concentrated a force of twenty thousand men in the neighbourhood of Vilkersdorf and the columns moved rapidly north on March 24, covering a wide front with a view to encircling the Boer force.

Writing from Commando Drift on April 2, Leachman described the events which followed :

“ We have been working very hard since I last wrote. All Colonel Rochefort's columns (we are one of his) collected at this place on the 23rd, and at 6 o p.m. on the same night we marched to join in the great de la Rey drive. We marched to about six miles beyond Bommerandstad that night without any baggage at all except what we could carry on our horses. We captured fifteen prisoners and a lot of wagons at about 4.0 a.m. and then halted for about an hour. We moved on at daybreak and marched till 6 o'clock in the evening when we halted, having done just on eighty miles in twenty-four hours. . . . The drive was not quite the success it might have been, but I think the total was a hundred and sixty prisoners, three guns and two pom-poms. We left the same evening at 8 o'clock on our return journey. We did forty miles that night and came on here the next day about twenty miles. Our mileage for the total trip came to a hundred and forty miles in seventy odd hours, which is not bad work ; we only lost one horse.”

Indeed, considering the difficulty of night marches, the nature of the country, and the short time available for halts, the march was a truly remarkable one and clearly demonstrates the hardiness of the men and the horses alike. As regards mobility the Boers could by now claim no advantage and, although the drive did not succeed in surrounding de la Rey, it achieved its main purpose in preventing the junction of the forces of the two Boer leaders.

Unpleasant news awaited the column on its return to Commando Drift. It was, in view of de la Rey's activities, considered to be too weak to operate alone and, consequently, it had been decided to split it up among the other columns. All the mounted men were sent to General Western's column, but most of the officers were so disgusted that they returned to their line regiments. Not so Leachman, however, whom the hard work had left as hard as nails and brimful of keenness. There was a chance of further strenuous work in the operations against de la Rey, and he determined not to miss the opportunity it afforded, for a comparative rest and the monotony of the life in a line regiment had small enticement for his arduous nature. He at once volunteered to go with the mounted infantry, and he wrote that it was the best thing he could have done, for he was at once sent for by General Western and offered work on his staff as Provost Marshal. "Of course, I jumped at it," he wrote and that in spite of the fact that he would receive less extra pay than he was then getting. The loss of pay did not affect him in the least, but what was of consequence was that Western's column, a thousand strong, was to march against de la Rey and that then they should see "some lively times."

He had a qucer way of voicing a grievance, always interlarding it between other items of news in

his staccato manner, but its effectiveness is apparent from the following extract :

“ I got three mails the other day but there are still two kicking about the country. They seem to have thought very highly of du Moulin, don't they? You have given up sending me tobacco so I have straightway run out of it. We are miles and miles from any town, we could not carry anything as we had no transport—well, I must stop.”

General Western's column started on its work without delay, but before entering the Transvaal it had first to cross the formidable Vaal, a most difficult undertaking and a dangerous one in the face of an active enemy, but Leachman tells us that it was successfully accomplished after thirty-six hours' hard work. The wagons and men were floated across on rafts, and the horses swum over behind the rafts. The column immediately got into touch with the Boers and a series of successful operations were carried out. The column proved that it was equal to the Boers in every department of the war game now being played. Leachman gives us an account of what took place in a letter written from Bloemhof on April 20 :

“ You see we have arrived at another town. If you want to find it on the map, you should follow the Vaal west from Bothaville and you will find it about thirty miles west of Hoopstad. . . . I suppose you saw about our great capture of prisoners. I was the only Royal Sussex officer in that show. All the rest had gone into Hoopstad with a convoy, but of course being Provost Marshal I stayed behind. We left here at 7.0 p.m. on the 15th with no transport of any kind but with food for three days on our horses,

After trekking forty-two miles without stopping we arrived at a little town called Schweize Reneke just at dawn, i.e., 5.15 a.m. We rushed the town and after very little fight captured seventy-two prisoners and any amount of wagons, stock, etc. We went after some more Boers outside the town, but they got away with about seventy wagons ; some of the wagons had a lot of money on them so it was a pity we did not get them. We camped that day in the town after covering just about fifty-five miles without unsaddling. The Boers outside the town were awfully wild and sniped us all day. We left next morning on our homeward journey with a lot of ox-wagons and about 800 head of cattle. I was put in charge of the prisoners and I assure you it was a great responsibility and I felt it as soon as we began to leave the town. The Boers came down in force and gave us a great show. They tried several times to charge into us but we drove them back each time. I, of course, wasn't in that show, but was busy pointing out to my prisoners the folly of misbehaving themselves, as if one of them gave any trouble I should straightway start plugging into the lot of them. We managed to get away from the Boers and reached here about midday on the 18th, having been three days without having my boots off or a wash, so you can imagine I was in a fairly healthy state of dirt. I have just handed over my prisoners to the convoy which is going into the line, and I am very glad to be rid of them. They were a very decent lot of fellows and, as many of them talked English, I heard a lot of good yarns. The most interesting of them I think was an adjutant of de Wet, who had been through the

whole show. He told me a lot of good stories about how de Wet used to get out when we had cornered him ; but one thing he wouldn't say anything about was the murder of the peace envoy Morgendaal. I know he knew all about it, but he wouldn't say a word. There seems to be a lot of talk about peace now. I hope they go on to the bitter end instead of stopping. It will look much better, because in years to come people will say that we had to make peace because we couldn't finish the war any other way."

It seems strange to think of this youth of twenty-one shepherding along this band of tough Boers with such determination of character and such resolution of purpose, and yet when the danger of their escaping to their friends, so near at hand, had passed, his generosity, which recognized them to be "a very decent lot of fellows," and the kindness which drew from them the yarns they had to tell, afford a sharp contrast to his severity when circumstances demanded it. Nor would he have been given so responsible an undertaking at so critical a time had he not been endowed with those special qualities which the task demanded.

Shortly after this spirited little action the column marched south into the Orange Free State where, to use Leachman's sporting parlance, they made a "bag" of twenty-four prisoners and about eight hundred head of cattle. The latter were handed over to Leachman, who found his task of cowboy no easy one :

"I had a terribly hard time of it as after we got the cattle I was put in charge of them and had two nights' trek of twenty-five miles to do and it was a very hard job getting them along,

particularly as we had to go through a lot of thick bush. However I got them all in here safely (Bloemhof), at least I think I only lost about thirty head. . . . During this trek one night there was the most perfect total eclipse of the moon, it got so dark we had to halt until it was over. . . . We have had great rumours of peace lately ; it seems quite strange to see the Boers riding in flying white flags I can tell you that after their games with white flags we don't trust them further than we can see them. If they do make peace it will seem most awfully funny. One has got to the stage now when one cannot imagine anything else than campaigning. I think that lots of officers who are now grumbling at the war will be quite sorry it is over after a month or two of peace."

Leachman did not look forward to a life of comparative inaction after the strenuous times he had experienced and which acted like a tonic on him. His vitality was amazing and he deliberately sought for and revelled in hard work whether it was play or exploration ; it was impossible for him to remain inactive for long. If the opportunity for expending his energy did not exist he created it for himself and having decided on the course he would take he carried out his plans with fiery energy. It was this fact that made him rather a " lone wolf " ; restraint, especially official, irked him, for it put an unnatural brake upon his velocity, and created a friction in his mind which exhibited itself in undisguised impatience.

On May 7 the great drive north against de la Rey began. Leachman's letter written from Vryburg, Bechuanaland, on May 13, gives a brief description of that remarkable advance :

" We arrived here on the 11th after taking

part in the big drive. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I think it was the most wonderful sight I have seen out here. We left Bloemhof on the night of the 7th, and the southern columns were all in position at dawn on the 8th. We then moved forward westward and got into touch with the northern columns on the night of the 9th. Then the whole line of about seventy miles moved toward the Kimberley-Mafeking railway line. It is very like a drive at home—you have the line in front called the driving screen which consists of groups of four about fifty yards apart; then behind comes the supports; then a long way behind each column comes the baggage. At some place on the march, from the hills, you could see long lines of men as far as one could see. We saw very few Boers; about fifty attacked our line while halted for the night, but they didn't get through. I had a lot of work getting cattle, of which there was a great number, as no column had been through that country for over a year.

"This is quite a decent place, but very overcrowded at present, as a lot of the driving columns are in here and as they are all Canadians, New Zealanders and National Scouts, everything is in rather a hubbub. . . . Up here they are betting ten to one on peace by May 15. It will be odd if they do arrange it. I can't believe it at all, as we have had so many rumours of peace before."

As a matter of fact, peace negotiations were being carried out by the representatives of both sides; it was one thing for the Boer leaders to negotiate for a cessation of hostilities but quite another matter for them to get the burghers to follow their

advice, and, while the British troops received orders to "stand still" so as to create a good atmosphere, the burghers, far from contributing to this spirit of good-will, embarrassed their leaders by being particularly truculent. The result was certainly rather humorous although of a rather grim quality, and the experience which Leachman gives of his column was shared by others with very similar results.

"We had rather an eventful return journey," he wrote on May 20. "We had been told when we started that we were to take no active measures against the Boers, as they were very busy making peace, and we weren't to disturb them. However, the first night after we'd got into camp and were having dinner a very heavy fire was poured into our horse-lines at close range. There was a great commotion what with horses stampeding, etc., but after a bit we turned the Boers out and gave them something to take away with them. We had two men wounded and several horses and mules shot but otherwise no damage was done.

"The next morning when we were starting off, about sixty Boers rushed one of our outposts and killed a man, but the rest of the post very pluckily rode right through them and got away. That night again when we had got in camp some Boers plugged right into camp but soon ran away. This sort of thing annoyed us rather, so the next day we lay quiet on a hill after the rest had moved off, and soon five Boers came riding up the hill. Well, we killed one, wounded two and captured the other two, so I think we ended up about even. . . . I am getting quite a linguist; I have such a lot to do with natives now that it is rather a good thing I can make

them understand me fairly well by means of a mixture of Dutch and Kaffir. I have a very high idea of the natives out here ; they are such chaps to work."

Leachman was developing two gifts which were to have a great influence on his career : these were an aptitude for languages and an admiration for subject folk and orientals. With them he was instinctively at home and his keen desire to learn their tongues was created by the eagerness of his mind to understand the people themselves. Moreover, the pains he took to learn something of three languages affords another example of the alertness and the energy of his mind which would not permit him to be indolent, even when the rigours of the campaign provided sufficient excuse to release him from unnecessary exertion.

At last on Sunday, June 1, peace was signed, but it had been so long expected that there was no excitement. To Leachman himself the end of his wanderings, forays, excitements and even hardships came with ill-disguised regret :

" I am afraid we shall soon all be put on our flat feet again and sent off to the headquarters of the regiment, which is at Bethulie. It will be sickening going back to the humdrum life of the regiment after all the excitement of the last eighteen months ; but I suppose it had to come sooner or later. . . . The Boers about here have not had any intimation of peace, yet lots of people in the camp have met armed Boers out shooting and talked to them. They are all very pleased with the idea of peace but say they can't come in and surrender until their commandants come back. . . . I expect I shall have tons of work in a few days, as when the Boers begin to come

in they will all be shoved under my charge and I am sure it will be hard work preventing them from being robbed as we do prisoners. . . ."

Leachman loathed any advantage being taken of anyone who might be in a helpless state. Honourable and generous himself, he would have given small shift to anyone whom he caught in so mean an act.

No sooner was the campaign over than he threw himself heart and soul into sport. Racing, polo, which he found a fascinating game but all too brief, golf and football filled in his spare time, and in the latter telling of his participation in these pastimes another interesting insight into his mentality is provided. He warned his mother that his letters would only be brief ones, since he would have nothing of interest about which to write. He was so essentially a realist that he found no time to waste on trivialities, nor could he conceive that, after the fateful events he had been describing, his peaceful occupations could be of any real interest to others. Moreover, he was due for leave, but he decided not to take it because his regiment had orders to sail for India in September and he particularly wanted to go with it, as it was "much nicer starting all square."

There are not many who would have foregone the opportunity of a well-earned rest in order to start "all square" on a new tour of duty. Nevertheless, to his astonishment on July 27 he found his name in orders for leave; even then he wrote that he could not take it until August 5 as he was playing in a polo tournament.

His colonel, who was due to leave his regiment in October, came in for some strong criticism; but the officer who was to relieve the latter was "a ripper," and we wonder what the qualities of these two officers were which created such conflicting opinions in his mind.

Once more Leachman delayed starting for home. On this occasion he had volunteered to take charge of a party of fifty of his regiment which was to take part in a torchlight review at Bloemfontein, and as it would be "rather fun" he decided to stop for it and was the keener to do so because he had never seen a tattoo before; so he stayed behind and practised with his men for two hours a day. In the midst of these occupations he had the great satisfaction of hearing that he had been mentioned in despatches, a distinction hard to come by and grudgingly bestowed in those days. Finally, on August 18, at the age of twenty-two, he sailed from South Africa for the last time on the S.S. *Bavarian* homeward bound.

Leachman left England for the first time on February 10, 1900, and he sailed from South Africa just two and a half years later; during this period he had passed from youth into manhood and had proved himself well fitted to shoulder the responsibilities of life. Throughout the campaign he never lost his poise or his practical outlook. He accepted all the vicissitudes of active service with an astonishing composure and an absolute lack of complaint. The only dissatisfaction that he showed was when he was ill, and then only because he was unfit to carry out his duties in the way he wished. We find him conscientious to a degree, and not least so in his correspondence to his mother. Covering the thirty months of his recent experiences there are no less than sixty-five of his letters to her available. The various types of "note-paper" he employed for this purpose provide a most interesting indication of the shifts to which he was put in order to carry out his filial duty. To take a few at random, there is the railway goods traffic form already referred to, a page torn from a school copy-book, a memorandum from

the National Bank of the Orange Free State, a sheet of paper headed St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Jagersfontein, and a soiled and crumpled slip of paper carried by a native runner through the wild and lonely wastes of Basutoland and, of course, several written sheets torn from his Field Service Pocket Book. In one occur the words, "I am very tired," and in another, to his mother, "I am down with fever," but he did not neglect her and when severely wounded he sent a telegram, "Going strong."

Brief as these letters are one cannot but be struck by their unassuming truth and sincerity; when he was afraid he did not attempt to conceal the fact, when he was hungry he said so complainingly. At the same time one is left with the desire to know more of the writer than he has disclosed. They are a simple and unadorned record of events.

From a professional point of view Leachman might rest well content with his work. He had been placed in temporary command of a company, had acted as a staff officer on several occasions, had earned the high opinion of his superior officers, and had been recommended by Colonel du Moulin for the Distinguished Service Order, but was considered by the higher authorities to be too young to receive it. He had been mentioned in despatches and granted two medals and six clasps. As to his experiences, they were varied enough to satisfy the most exacting spirit. He had been in seven major engagements and in countless minor actions. He had been almost perpetually exposed to danger and had survived, he had witnessed the harvest of war in all its forms—the tragic losses in battle and the plunderings, burnings, looting, and devastation inseparable from an armed conflict; it was a lot to learn by the age of twenty-two. Already his course was set and it was evident that it would be no ordinary one.

CHAPTER VII

WORK AND PLAY

LEACHMAN passed four splendid months of leave in England, and divided his time between his home at Petersfield and Mornington, the home of his married sister, Mabel, and her husband. He expended some of his boundless energy in shooting, hunting and dancing. He was a good shot, a fine horseman and a fair dancer, and enjoyed life with a zest which only high spirits and splendid health could permit. Being very witty and loving a frolic, no party was or, indeed, could be dull at which he was present, and already having a host of friends his home was always full of young and charming people. If his mother mildly remonstrated at the sudden appearance of unexpected guests, he would laugh away her anxieties and, somehow or other, although the house might be ill-prepared for their reception, or apparently filled to capacity, his ingenuity found a place for all and his good humour dispelled all thoughts of inconvenience.

He had an astonishing gift for living and living vitally for the actual present. The war was finished, therefore he cast its memories completely aside, and no-one who met the lean, bronzed young fellow and being unaware of the fact, would have guessed that he had so recently returned from active service. The memories of the campaign were already stored away in his retentive mind, and there they would remain until he would later draw upon them according to his need.

In January, 1903, he rejoined his regiment, then stationed at Sitapur in Bengal. Straightway he made provision for occupying his spare time. As is generally the case with young officers returning to duty from leave in England, his means were somewhat straightened and he appealed to his father for temporary financial help for the purchase of a polo pony. He thoroughly enjoyed a full week of sport and dances in March prior to the regiment moving up to the hills at Ranikhet. He discovered that this hill-station was close to the Tibetan border. At once his restless nature prompted him to think out plans for entering that forbidden country, where he heard that there was excellent shooting. Meantime he was working hard for his promotion examination, which he duly passed, and received his rise in rank to lieutenant in the middle of March. Instead of proceeding with the regiment to Ranikhet, however, he was selected to undergo a transport course at Lucknow, and was delighted to get this opportunity, because it provided one of the best means for getting on active service. Hardly had he reached Lucknow than was he all on edge again to take part in the Somaliland campaign, for he learnt that reinforcements were being sent there from India, and he hastily wrote to his people to beg them to try to procure for him an introduction to General Sir Edmond Barrow as "influence seems to be the only thing that gets one on in India." This letter was written on April 30, only four months after his arrival in India, but, already, he was seeking for some fresh outlet for his energy, some excitement, and a change from the monotony of cantonment life. Instead of his enthusiasm for adventure being damped by his recent experiences in the South African War they only whetted the edge of his desire for fresh adventures.

While at Lucknow he was the guest of the Gloucestershire Regiment, whose officers he described as "a very nice lot of fellows and as I knew a good many of them before, I am having a good time." When he was in South Africa some slight annoyance had caused him to write of this famous regiment in less complimentary terms, and he did not hesitate to make amends here. As a matter of fact, consistency of judgment was a matter of supreme indifference to him. He stated his opinion and gave it on men and matters fearlessly, honestly, and bluntly according to his view of them at that particular moment. At the time his judgment was, to him, the correct one, but he never hesitated to modify it should another view commend itself to him in other circumstances.

With his friends of the Gloucestershire Regiment he enjoyed plenty of sport, in spite of the weather, which became very hot. He purchased his polo pony, which was "vicious in the stall but excellent to ride," and played polo three days a week, filling in the odd days with tennis.

"Kitchener," he wrote, "is very quiet and subdued here at present. I think George Nathaniel, as every one calls Curzon, sits on him in the same way as he does all the army. Every one is praying for the time when he will give up being Viceroy; he is so unpopular."

Leachman was now beginning to study the natives of India seriously and to distinguish between the fighting and non-fighting classes and, knowing the admiration he had for the manly, cheerful Basutos, it is not surprising to read of his preference for the martial types of Indian.

"I am getting into the ways of the natives by degrees, and I can't say I like them any better.

At least the ordinary run of natives ; of course the native regiments are awfully fine, especially the infantry. What I object to, is the way they are always trying to get the better of one."

At the beginning of May Leachman, having completed his course, rejoined his regiment at Ranikhet, from which place he wrote on June 10, saying that he was laid up with fever and was feeling a perfect wreck, but was completing his degree in freemasonry, as there was a lodge there to which many of the officers belonged. Meantime every one was "on the hop because General Gaselee, G.O.C. in Bengal, is carrying out his tour of inspection."

On June 24, having recovered from his fever, he wrote to say that things had been very dull as every one was ill with a strange illness, in consequence of which he had been doing the work of adjutant and paymaster, as well as that of about five other officers. So far he himself had escaped infection, at which he wondered because, as he described it, "This place is very unhealthy ; there are such a lot of smells everywhere. . . . They have got cholera very bad at Naini Tal, and every one is dashing down to the plains." He was greatly distressed at the death of Colonel Wheeler, who commanded the regiment and who, having become seriously ill, was sent home only to die on board ship. Under these circumstances it is not surprising to learn that Leachman was looking forward to going to Pachmari in August for a musketry course, in spite of the expense, for it entailed "lugging" his stable and household down there.

On July 1 he wrote to his father to sympathize with him for not being elected to the Urban District Council, and a remark of his father's opponent called forth an angry outburst.

" I was sorry to see that you did not get in for the Urban District Council, but I think you did very well considering that you did not canvass at all. Of course it is a sign of what modern Petersfield is when they elect a man like B——. The one thing I do object to is when he says that ' Doctor Leachman is a man of honour ' ; no-one asked him to give his opinion on the state of your honour. Beastly check I call it. Cholera is pretty bad and we have got it in the bazaar here, but of course it will go as soon as the monsoon breaks and it is expected to do so every day now. We had an exciting bit of news this morning, that Captain Gree is to be married on July 29 to a Brighton girl, a great beauty. I win five pounds thereby, as he bet me that sum that he would not get married while at home."

He was once more temporarily in command of a company, but would have to give it up on the return of the actual commander.

" I am sorry," he wrote, " as the company I have had is by far and away the best in the regiment and I have got on well with the men ; but that is the worst of being a subaltern, one is always being changed from one company to another."

He had planned to pay a visit to the Pindri Glacier before going for his musketry course, but in the middle of July he was suddenly afflicted with a queer malady :

" Last Saturday, that is five days ago, when I woke up in the morning I found that I could not move my left leg at all but I thought it had only gone to sleep ; however, it got worse and worse

and finally the left leg was numb up to the hip and the right leg as far as the knee. I was rather alarmed so I sent for the doctor. He told me that I had had an attack of neuritis, and said it must have come from straining myself, which I had done in the last gymkhana. Anyhow he did not seem to know quite what to do and here I am still absolutely unable to move my legs. However, you need not be alarmed as it must go off after a few days. . . . I certainly don't miss much by having to stay indoors, as it has not stopped raining now for four days. . . . I have been doing a lot of work lately, at least book work, as one has to know a lot about musketry when one goes up to Pachmari and they send you down again if you don't know enough. It is rather dull sort of stuff, but I think all musketry is a little uninteresting."

By August 5 there was but little improvement in his condition, although he could hobble about his room on crutches. To his great disappointment, his slow progress meant that he would be unable to go on his musketry course. In spite of his condition, however, he decided to go down to his regiment to Sitapur so as to be there when the shooting began. His enforced idleness made him envy his parents their continental trip, and he twitted his sister Mildred on her "six hours a day tennis and eleven and a half hours' sleep."

In spite of the cheery tone of his letter Leachman was somewhat apprehensive about his complaint "as the doctors here don't seem to know much about it." A week later he was only able to move about slowly with the aid of a stick ; but the monotony was broken a bit by the bestowal of the King's South African medals to the officers and men who

took part in that campaign. "The presentation was followed by a big show up at the mess. . . ." He had been talking to a young officer recently returned from active service on the N.W. Frontier. At once his interest was awakened. He greedily and enviously wrote down everything he was told, and yearned to take part in a similar show himself. Indeed, he was ceaselessly on the look-out to escape from ordinary routine work and experience the only real satisfaction he got out of life by undertaking some arduous and unusual form of occupation.

Writing again on August 19 he informed his mother that he was a good deal better, but would be unfit for duty for some time as all the joints of his legs were very weak and gave at each step, nor had the sensibility returned. In spite of this rather serious condition he insisted upon riding, although he had no grip in the saddle and was liable to be thrown at any minute. He refused to become the slave of his malady and, with great determination, forced himself to do as much as he possibly could. Impatient at his treatment by the army doctor "who has been attending me (or rather not) I now go to the assistant surgeon who is a native, but I should say could give points to any army doctor," and with the help of this ally, although very weak on his legs, he took up signalling, of which he had already had some experience while at Charterhouse, and which he liked very much, but found it a difficult science at which to become expert.

On September 2, he was in low spirits as shooting started on the previous day: "everybody is out all day slaying various animals but, alas! I am not able at present to deport myself on the *khud* (mountain) side." So to detract his attention from the pleasures he was missing he worked specially hard for his Hindustani examination, which was due to take

place in the beginning of October. He had a special incentive for doing so. "This enormous amount of energy has been caused by an order that has come out that no officer may go shooting alone unless he has passed the exam. I think this is a foolish order as I can talk perfectly well, and yet may not be able to pass on account of bad writing or reading, which is of no use to anybody."

As a matter of fact the order was a wise one, as he would have been the first to acknowledge later on. For the moment his hasty nature only saw the inconvenience to himself and he was angry lest his failure to pass might interfere with his enjoyment. With his undoubted gift for languages—apparent from the fact that he could already converse fluently in Hindustani and had done passably well with the African languages—he might have foreseen that, as was actually the case, he would pass the test without difficulty, and, although he could not be aware of it at the time, a knowledge of the script which he was now forced to acquire was of the greatest value to him in later years. It was unfortunate for his servant that the latter selected the moment of his ill-humour to misbehave himself :

"I don't know if you notice my hand is shaking, but I have just been bestowing summary punishment on my bearer. They have just opened the native bazaar again after it had been closed for cholera, and of course my bearer went down and marked the occasion by getting gloriously drunk. That I didn't mind very much, but I had warned him once before that he had better keep out of my way when he was in that state. Well, to-day he didn't, and came and annoyed me so I hurt him."

By the end of September to his great delight he

was able to go shooting, although his legs would not allow him to dance or play games. The lure of the wilds deprived his parents of their weekly letter—a most unusual neglect with him.

“ You had to do without a letter from me last week,” he wrote later, “ as I was away shooting. I did a good lot of it last week. I was away Saturday and Sunday and then came back and was away again on Monday evening, going to a place in the wilds about twelve miles from here. I camped out, and had a very good time and excellent sport.”

But he was very irate because he found his freedom of movement restricted, and by no less a person than Lord Curzon, who was likewise bent on a shooting expedition, and the roads were kept clear for the viceregal party.

By October 7 the time was near for the regiment to return to the plains. Leachman had previously expressed a great dislike for Ranikhet, but now he altered his opinion of that maligned place at the prospect of leaving, though quite honest with himself about his changed views :

“ We have already got to the end of our stay in Ranikhet and of course when I wanted to leave I couldn't and now when we have to go I want to stay. I really quite like the place, but I think it is only because of the shooting ; it is nice and cold up here and we always sit at night in front of a big fire and drink hot grog (which I also like).”

Hearing that General Barrow was going home on leave, he at once thought of a bit of wire-pulling : “ You just see him,” he wrote to his mother, “ and

see if you can't get something out of him for me, because he is a bit of a power in the land out here."

The failure of Major Scaife, the second-in-command, to get command of the Battalion, elicited his lively sympathy ; but, on the other hand, the selection of Colonel Skinner for that appointment he considered to be in the best interests of the regiment : " Skinner has seen a lot of service and knows India well ; he is a Staff College man and about the best rifle shot in India, and I believe he is a very nice chap." He could not conceal his pride in his regiment by expressing his great pleasure at its " being tremendously cracked up " after having been temporarily in disfavour.

And now we read of another change of opinion, this time concerning Lord Curzon, who passed once more through Ranikhet in the middle of October.

" I have moved in such high circles lately that I wonder that I can bring myself to write to you. The Viceroy came through here on Monday and I was in command of his guard at the *dāk* bungalow here and he asked me to dinner ; it was rather an honour as he very seldom does ask the officer on guard in, but I suppose he was struck by my good looks or something. He was most affable and talked away a lot ; he does nothing but ask questions. . . . After dinner, which lasted about two and a half hours, he went straight back to work with his secretary and was up at six the next morning, so he can't get much sleep."

The last four days at Ranikhet were spent in a series of farewell entertainments, ending up with a fancy dress ball at the club, which Leachman saw through to the last dance, in spite of the fact that he had to leave almost immediately after its termination

at 4 a.m. in charge of the transport on its march down to the plains. In addition to being transport officer he was also acting adjutant, and although his combined responsibilities meant his getting up at 3.30 a.m. every morning to see his one hundred and thirty carts on the road, and much hard riding, he thoroughly enjoyed it all. On reaching the plains once more his pleasure was unbounded: "It is just ripping—it was a sight for sore eyes to see nice level ground again."

On the fifth day Kathgodam was reached and here the regiment entrained comfortably for Sitapur, where everything was beautifully green and fresh and the prospects of a gay time increased by the presence of fifteen ladies. He lost no time in organizing his sports; first and foremost of which were polo and shooting. He tried hard to entice other officers in the regiment to join with him in getting up polo and to buy polo ponies but, "they are so silly, they spend all their money in going to Lucknow for two or three days." Golf he also attempted, but he could not stand on his feet, and we wonder how he was able to survive the hard work of the march down when so incapacitated; yet he managed to go shooting and had a "grand day," four guns bagging one hundred and thirty duck which meant good shooting, and being in water from six in the morning to half-past five in the evening, followed by a journey back of twelve miles. But they did not always have such luck, for on the next occasion they went eighty miles to shoot one snipe because the rice-fields were still uncut. In the midst of his description of his shoots he suddenly remembered his duty as a god-parent and in his inimitable way interpolated instructions to his mother: "I don't think I have ever given my god-daughter anything (I forget her name); will you get a mug for her? A nice one and

pretty big," and having discharged this duty he continued his letter with a description of the prospect of polo.

Thanks to a secret tip and a judiciously placed bet at the Lucknow Races he paid all his expenses in connection with the outing, being the only one of his regimental officers to do so. The others all came back very poor and sorry for themselves. But sport was not everything, for they had four days' hard soldiering in preparation for the General's inspection. "Thank goodness," he wrote, "he is a decent sort of fellow and not such an arrant beast as —— who inspected us last time, so I hope we shall get a decent report."

Leachman wrote rather gloomily on Christmas Eve in spite of having spent some most enjoyable days black-buck shooting. He did not look forward to his first Christmas Day in India. Most of his brother officers were away and there were very few ladies left at the station. "Moreover," he concluded his letter, "Christmas is not very lively. All one's many servants arrive in the morning with filthy-looking cakes which they present to you and for which you have to pay, which puts me in a bad temper for the day." Then one of his brother officers lost a polo pony and instead of buying a new one disappointed Leachman sadly. "It is bad luck but I think he has plenty of money, but is saving up to get married, which is a pity. Our new colonel arrived last week—he seems very nice but is most extraordinary quiet. He has already brought in some very good reforms for the men."

Once more we see Leachman's interest in his men. It will have been noticed that his letters are full of his doings in the realm of sport. He seldom refers to the professional side of his activities, yet he worked indefatigably and earnestly in the regiment and was

greatly beloved by the men in whom he always took a keen and personal interest, and for whom he did much.

By January, 1904, his legs had improved considerably, but he was by no means cured and he was still unable to put his right leg where he wanted to place it. He took his misfortune very philosophically, and even humorously, in spite of the length of time the trouble had lasted and in spite of his doubts as to whether a real cure could be effected. His parents were naturally anxious about him, but he deprecated any fuss being made about it. "It is no good getting a doctor to write to you about it as they would only think you and me and everyone else a great nuisance, which is the way of the R.A.M.C. man." The truth of the matter was that he was always extremely shy of calling special attention to himself. He had now got to know his new colonel well and expressed his great admiration and esteem for him: "Our new colonel is a perfect ripper, he is as keen as mustard on everything, and doesn't care a bit about the people who play up to him (which is the popular amusement of the regiment just at present)," which remark gives a pretty clear indication of Leachman's own professional standards.

At the time he wrote he was once more hard at work at signalling, in preparation for his departure to the signalling school at Kasauli.

The beginning of his next letter written on January 27, 1904, is so much in keeping with his straightforward and direct character as to merit quotation: "I did not write a letter last week as I forgot all about it." The reason was that he took a football team to Cawnpore, where he stayed for three days and greatly enjoyed himself. He concluded with unfeigned satisfaction that the natives did not care much about driving people to see the famous well.

A week later, during a storm of rain at night, he rode his bicycle into a ditch, smashing it and badly cutting his head and legs. A few days after this mishap he was lent a pony to practise over jumps and came a bad cropper, being only saved from breaking his neck by his solar topee, but getting off with a black eye and a badly cut nose. At the end of February half the regiment was, to his great disgust, ordered up to the hills, and his displeasure was increased by the fact that the band was included, while he himself had to remain behind without music until April, when he was due to leave for Kasauli. "There is little excuse," he said, "for so early a move, as the weather in Sitapur is beautiful and it is cold in the hills." Shortly afterwards, however, an unexpected hot spell unfortunately caused the death of several babies, which angered him greatly, because "they never seem to take them out of the station early enough." It is interesting to note this quick change of opinion. It will have been noticed how on several occasions he rails against circumstances which interfere with his plans or enjoyment—as in the first outburst about the band and the ladies going to the hills—but the deaths of these poor mites at once evoked his compassion, his own petty grievance was forgotten and his anger flared up at the slackness he considered had been shown in taking proper precautions. He did not stop to think whether it was really nobody's fault, but occasioned by an unfortunate and unforeseen change in the weather.

A month later he wrote from Kasauli, where he had received a warm letter of congratulation from his colonel for passing first in the examination for admission, "but telling me not to get a swelled head from my success; I don't think I suffer from that as a rule."

Although the work at Kasauli was severe there

appeared to be plenty of time for amusements, as is shown from his letter written from there on May 5 :

“ I have been in quite a whirl of gaiety since I last wrote, what with picnics by day and dances and picnics by night, dinners, etc. It is the fashion out here to go and eat one's dinner in some nearly inaccessible spot miles away and get back about daybreak. The natives always think the sahibs have gone mad on these occasions, and I don't wonder.”

His keen work as a soldier had evidently drawn to him the attention of those in authority, for he received a telegram offering him the appointment of Station Staff Officer at Naini Tal and unpaid attaché in the Bengal Command, which latter appointment meant “being a sort of A.D.C. to General Gaslec. Of course, it is an excellent way of getting on and I can't think why they offered it to me.” He was not certain whether he would be able to accept the offer, as the signalling course was due to last till July 6, and it was doubtful whether the appointment would be kept vacant so long.

“ I don't know that I shall be heartbroken, as I hate going away from the regiment, but it is the only way of getting on. By the bye *re* the word ‘ doyley ’ (as you spell it), I looked it up in a dictionary and it was spelt my way but of course I bow to your superior knowledge. You see I am rather handicapped in my spelling because I write so plainly that you can see how each word is spelt, which is not the case with everyone's writing !!! ”

This last sentence was evidently a sly dig at his mother. Shortly afterwards the news was received that the regiment, during the coming cold weather,

was to march to Rawal Pindi, which meant three months on the road. But he was not destined to accompany his regiment on this long but interesting march, for the appointment of Station Staff Officer at Naini Tal was kept vacant for him, and, having passed his signalling course with credit, he immediately afterwards proceeded to take up his new duties.

Naini Tal was an important hill station. The appointment was a good one and the fact that Leachman was selected for it at so early an age—he was under twenty-four—shows that he was well thought of. Moreover, he also had to act as an A.D.C. to General Gaselec, which meant that he was considered to have tact and charm, which he did in fact possess. It may seem strange that one so direct, at times so hasty and so quick-tempered, could also display those other qualities which were an essential for a staff officer to a general of an important command. Yet such was indeed a fact. His was a very lovable nature. He was kindness and consideration itself. No one could have been more thoughtful for others than was this very fiery-tempered young officer. He made friends easily and, what is more important, seldom, if ever, lost one. But strangely enough, although his friends were legion, few realized at this period of his life the latent forces which flowed beneath the surface.

For just a year he continued in his new post, without anyone suspecting that he had any other ambitions than to conscientiously carry out his duties in Naini Tal and amuse his general's guests. But he had other plans and ambitions, as will be seen.

CHAPTER VIII

JOURNEY INTO TIBET—JUNE 1905

WE have now followed Leachman continuously throughout a campaign and as a peace-time soldier. During the whole of this period his restlessness impresses itself upon us, so that we ourselves become impatient to see him obtain the opportunity he was always seeking for an outlet for his pent-up energies and for that independent action he burnt to take. In war the never-ending marches and constant encounters with the enemy left him barely satisfied. In peace, regimental work absorbed but a part of his energies, and he expended himself in *shikar*, in sports of various kinds, and in preparing himself to be fully qualified to proceed on active service should the opportunity present itself.

On each occasion on which he was given a chance of acting independently his spirits rose and their happy reflection was mirrored in his letters. Conversely, if he was temporarily incapacitated, from whatever cause, he chafed and fumed and invariably resumed work before the disability was removed. When down with fever in South Africa he doggedly followed the column in an ox-wagon. When his legs were paralysed he rode, although his limbs refused to perform their proper function, and he attempted to play golf when his muscles were still unable to support him.

And now at last in June, 1905, at Naini Tal an opportunity occurred for putting into execution a plan which had for long been simmering in his mind.

The fact that, if he carried it out, serious consequences might result for himself, did not in the least deter him.

He was due for short leave, and, ever on the lookout for a chance of adventure, he decided to go into Tibet for a shooting trip.

For political reasons no British officer or official was permitted to enter that forbidden country, except with the sanction of the highest British authorities in India, and then only after the permission of the Dalai Lama or his representative had been obtained.

This was exactly the sort of situation which appealed to Leachman ; by nature a born explorer, the lure of the unknown had an irresistible attraction for him. His calculated impetuosity made him scorn official restrictions and dismiss every difficulty with contempt. Not only was Tibet a little known country, and therefore worthy of his particular attention, but the most famous of the wild mountain sheep abounded amongst its brooding solitudes ; and, as sport was a passion with him, the magnetic lure of sport and exploration became irresistible.

With the cunning and boldness of the true adventurer he completed his arrangements in strict secrecy, and then moved with the greatest rapidity.

His initial movements seemed innocent enough. He lunched in Naini Tal at the house where " the only girl I've ever loved lives." That simple admission, no easy matter for a man of Leachman's disposition to make, was only too tragically true ; she *was* the only girl he ever loved and he lost her—not through any fault of his own, nor because their union would have been unsuitable in any way, but on account of one of those family misunderstandings which arise in spite of the good intentions of all concerned. It would ill serve the memory of

Leachman to go deeper into the subject. There was no mystery about it—the facts were exactly as stated, no more and no less. Perhaps if Leachman had been less reticent in the days of his childhood, or more demonstrative, that bitter hurt would not have been inflicted.

When difficulties not of his seeking arose he hid his true feelings in a burst of temper. His servants came to dread the English mail-day; and he estranged himself for a time from his people, who failed to note the depth of feeling flowing beneath the current of his anger until it was too late. Many of Leachman's friends to this day believe him to have been a "woman hater." Nothing could be further from the truth: he thoroughly enjoyed the society of women, but in all his life he only looked at one woman with a view to marriage. His nature was loyal almost to a fault, he would risk his life for a friend, as will be shown later. He was not the man to love idly, and so perhaps this is a fitting place to dispose of this one romance of his life. He left the warmth of that house in Naini Tal to go alone into the wilderness of Tibet, and he went alone through the wilderness of life unwarmed by the companionship he longed for.

On Saturday, June 10, he started on his way, his only companions, apart from his native cook, being natives of the country he was visiting. In this manner he gained his first experience of the technique and difficulties of exploration. His instinct had called him to the work for which he was so well suited. This first lone venture into Tibet decided his future—never again would he be content to remain for long in the centres of civilization. As time went on, his projects became more and more ambitious.

From a casual remark in one of his letters we learn

that he kept a diary in some detail of this journey into Tibet, but unfortunately this document seems to have disappeared, and we have to rely on an abbreviated account written in pencil on five sheets of notepaper. As these closely written sheets provide the only record of his journey they are reproduced below in full, such notes being added in parenthesis as may enlighten the reader who is unacquainted with that part of the East :

“ Saturday, June 10. Started on hired pony at 2.45 p.m. Reached Khairna where I had tea and met my own pony. Lost my way in Ranikhet looking for garrison mess. Found Tweedy's house (he is in —) 8 p.m. Saw Greenwood (Petersfield one) at dinner. 26 miles.

“ Sunday, June 11. Started 5 a.m. on a hired pony, reached Dwarahet at 9 a.m. Luckily I found that there was a *kharsamah* (cook) at *dâk* bungalow (rest house) so had breakfast—rode on to Gunai and stopped there for an hour and then started to walk to Lobha, 15 miles—got most frightfully done and only just staggered in at 6.30 p.m., having done 37 miles. I found my servants and kit all arrived. (A fine march in mountainous country.)

“ Monday 12. Started at 4.30 a.m. and marched all down hill through Abdadri to Simle where Alah Namla river is reached. I had a bathe in it and as it is snow water it was cold. Reached Karumpryag 2.30 p.m.—very hot place—my kit did not get in till 11 p.m. so I ate chupathis and rice and dates from the bazaar (and I wonder I am alive to write this). 22 miles.

“ Tuesday 13. Started 5.30 a.m. all coolies

struck but came on later. Reached Narnpryag fairly early but coolies did not get in till 5 p.m. Slept in the open as I could find no place level enough to pitch a tent.

" Wednesday 14. Marched at 5 a.m. to Pipalkoti. Took on a new lot of coolies at Narnpryag but they didn't get in till 8 p.m. Beastly hot. 16 miles.

" Thursday 15. Marched 5.30 to Gulabkote. Nice and cool. Made midday halt and went on at 3 p.m. to Joshimath but my coolies did not get in till 8 p.m. 18 miles.

" Friday 16. Had trouble getting coolies so kit did not leave till 10 a.m. I left at 6 a.m. Marched to Sapoban 9 miles. Met a district surveyor named Rendall in camp there, who gave me tiffin ; nice man. Rained in evening.

" Saturday 17. Marched at 6 a.m. Serai Tota, nine miles, very windy. Had great trouble pitching tent. Got English mail brought.

" Sunday 18. Marched 5.15 a.m. to Juma, nine miles, the pack sheep on the road are a great nuisance, one can't get past. Fine view of Dunagin (mountain 22,000) and mountain over Badrinath. Most uncomfortable in camp as there was a howling wind and awful dust.

" Monday 19. Started at 9.15 a.m. and marched to Malari, nine miles. Quite the nicest march I have had—coolies who were mostly women got in very quickly. Malari is quite a big village. I found there a tent and servant left behind by three men up here shooting, in King's Own

" Tuesday 20. Started at 5.15 a.m. intending to march to Nite village, but at Bampa (6 miles, I met my *shikari*, one Jai Singh, who said that

the best arrangements could be made there, so camped; much nicer than usual. Three men who have been up to the Nite Pass brought in awful accounts of the roads, so I shall try the Char Mote Pass instead. Jai Singh got beastly drunk and I had to knock him down and shall get another *shikari*, quite a good man, I think, Mukhan Singh by name.

" Wednesday 21. Owing to trouble in getting yaks did not start off till 9 a.m. Had disastrous start as a yak fell off the path and broke a horn, etc., also my bakepot—had to send back for another yak—so I camped at Karah—5 miles, did not get in till 3 p.m. Mazir, my cook, complains of fever and wants to know if Bovril is good for it—shall have to send him back if not better to-morrow

" Thursday 22. Hard, bad day after a bitter cold night (it was 15,000 ft.). It froze hard, started at 5 a.m. for the Char Mote Pass—breath soon began to get a bit difficult but otherwise I reached top of pass 18,000 ft. with practically no discomfort. Wazir and Hurri (a *shikari*) very much done and it was only by many curses that I could get them up. Magnificent view of Nandi Deir 25,000 ft. and Trisul 23,000 close to me, also saw miles into Tibet in the front of me. Took us till 11 a.m. to do about 4 miles. Tremendous descent the other side, first over snow and then over sharp rocks which simply tore the soles off one's boots. Camped at Rim Khin at 5 p.m. having taken 12 hours to do 10 miles. I do not call this a hard pass—it would be from the Tibet side, but we met a Tibetan with some sheep which he had brought over. Very cold camps such a howling wind.

" Friday 23. Left camp standing and started

at 4 a.m. after 'burrel' (a goatish animal of sorts). Did a ghastly climb over very bad ground and stalked a large herd, fifty at least. Came on a smaller herd, mostly females, but *shikari* said one male, had a shot and broke one's hind leg. After a long shot succeeded in getting him, or rather her, it was a female—anyhow we wanted meat badly. After wading an ice-cold river I got back to camp at 11 a.m.—knees and hands and face very sore from a combination of sun and icy wind which gets up every day about midday and goes on till night. Rather fed up from having nothing to do but meditate.

"Saturday 24. Left camp at 4.30 a.m. After a long climb came on any amount of male burrel. After much trouble got a shot at long range and succeeded in bringing one down. Took two hours to get to it and then found it had a fine head of twenty-five and a half inches—very good head indeed.

"Sunday 25. Snowing a little—moved camp at 5 a.m. to Chote a Hote about seven miles—frightfully cold—road fairly good for a wonder. In afternoon went up on to hills after burrel but saw none—too much snow about.

"Monday 26. Meant to have started early but Wazir overslept himself so we did not get off till 7 a.m. Just as well as it was awfully cold. Marched till 12 noon about nine miles. Camped at Shalshal, rather warmer camp. Saw an animal about the size of a mastiff and like a dog, called it 'chanku'; also any number of beasts like rats, only much larger, who live in holes and give a chirruping noise—called 'pigars' (conies).

"Tuesday 27. I take back all I said about

the camp being warmer—by far the coldest night I have had—froze like anything besides blowing a young gale. Had breakfast at 8 a.m. but in the middle of it four burrel were spotted just above the camp. I went after them (to the ruination of my digestion) and had a shot—missed first time but killed one second shot—he was only 17 inches. Camped at a place called Kunbar, 5 miles. I really think this camp is a little warmer; at least, it has not begun to blow yet. Dosed a coolie with brandy for fever—hope they don't all get fever as I have only one bottle.

“Wednesday 28. After quite a warm night started at 7 30 a.m. Had a stiff climb up to a pass which must have been fairly high as it made one blow like anything. Saw the famed Lal Puhar (Red Hill) region below us famed for sport. Camped at Dakar nine miles. Camps of Tibetans with a lot of yak and sheep. Women are quite handsome in a way and are very like the pictures of Red Indians—the men slouch about just like the British labourer.

“Thursday 29. Had rather a bad night through the barking of Bhutia hounds round my tent. Started at 4.30 a.m. and went to the Chota (small) Lal Pahar. Sent two men back to bring the camp to a place called Talang, which I thought would be closer to the shooting ground. We spotted some *ovis ammon* (the beast I have come all this way for) and after rather a good stalk I got close to them but found five females and one small male, so I did not shoot. Went on to Talang, where we found the camp just arrived but, alas, no water, so we had to tramp back about three miles—beastly nuisance as it makes it so far to the Lal Pahar.

Camped at 3 p.m. Shot a duck very like a 'brahmine' only better eating. Any number of 'kyang' (wild horses) on the Lal Pahar.

"Friday 30. Started at 4.30 a.m. for the Burra (large) Lal Pahar. Very long way, 8 miles I should think. Almost at once sighted large herd of *ovis*. About twenty, all males. After a long stalk of about two hours, which was nearly spoilt by some 'kyang,' succeeded in getting a shot at one with, I think, a very large head; just missed him. I got some easy shots into the herd as they went away and knocked over two. Awfully lucky. Much too big to bring away, so cut off heads and brought them in. Weary walk back. Horns measure one 45 inches, other about 40. My feet are rather bad, toe-nail coming off one, and heel bad on other where I danced all night on a nail in my shoe. Saw some very large hares, very like Belgian hares in colour.

"Saturday, July 1. Did not go out early. Sent out yaks for the two *ovis*. In afternoon walked round hills near camp but saw nothing. Nice warm day.

"Sunday 2. Stayed in camp till the afternoon. At 4.30 p.m. went with *shikari* to Lal Pahar and slept out the night. Had rather a bad night but not very cold.

"Monday 3. Started at 5 a.m. and went all over the hills but only saw one or two female *ovis*. Got back to camp at noon. My feet are awfully bad—toe and heel in an awful mess—shall have to wear *chaplis* (sort of sandal) instead of boots.

"Tuesday 4. Moved at 7 a.m. to Talang on the road to Dongpu. At the camp an old Tibetan gentleman appeared, riding to Kyung

Lung; he was most affable and kept a prayer wheel turning the whole time, even when he was riding. Have run out of tinned milk, which is a nuisance, as I can't have porridge now. Sent out *shikari* to have a look round for *ovis* but saw nothing.

" Wednesday 5. Started at 7 a.m. and marched to Dongpu about 8 miles. The town is too desolate for anything. It consists of a sort of fort which I suppose they would call a *jong*, perched on the top of a hill with a cluster of huts, mostly without roofs, below. The place seemed inhabited by five old women and two dogs. I only saw one man working in a field of sorts. Crossed a biggish river on a *shikari*'s back and camped by the side of it. Missed two 'chaker' with great success.

" Thursday 6. Marched at 7.30 a.m. to Gyangal, 8 miles. Crossed another river. Gyangal is apparently a sort of pasturage for sheep. Thank goodness my feet are nearly well again and I can wear boots. *Shikari* says one could get to wild yak ground (my aim and object in life) in 4 marches from here. To-day has been quite hot—sun much too warm to be about in with only a *putta* (Kashmiri cloth hat) on which is the only thing I have got with me. Mukhan Singh's (*shikari*) brother turned up here with his son, such a nice-looking boy, quite clean. There are some Tibetan women working in the fields here, who are the filthiest beings I have ever seen.

" Friday 7. Started at 6.30 a.m. with *shikari* and went down to have a look at the Sutlej, which is about 7 miles from Gyangal; it is only about 20 yards broad here. There is quite a decent bridge over it. We keep on running

across Mukhan Singh's relations. Yesterday we met his brother and nephew and to-day we saw his brother-in-law, rather a villainous-looking person. I have been trying to force into Wazir's mind the making of a beefsteak pudding and I am to have one to-night, so perhaps I shall get a little more sleep than I did last night. Hardly got any at all; I don't know if it's from drinking too much tea. Yesterday we bought a lot of milk, boiled it, put a lot of sugar in it and then boiled it until it was quite thick; it tastes just like Devonshire cream and I believe will keep for a long time. My camp to-day has moved to Nebra.

"Saturday 8. Started at 7.15 a.m. Beefsteak pudding had no effect as I had another bad night. Marched to Daba and camped just below the town. In the afternoon went up to the town and saw the sights. Discovered that no European had been there as long as oldest inhabitant could remember. Crowds of Bhutians in but very few Tibetans about. A sepoy, discharged from 39th Garhwalis, was delighted to see me. The British Trade Agent from Gartok, established by Foreign Office at Simla, was in and I had a long talk with him. At the present time he is apparently travelling round trying to find out the best means of establishing trade with India. Read a letter from Cawnpore Wool Mills asking a lot of questions about wool. Succeeded in getting a box of matches, also sugar and rice which I had run out of. I am taking some despatches back to India for British Trade Agent. Mukhan Singh came back to camp slightly drunk so I will give him what-for to-morrow.

"Sunday 9. Marched at 6.30 a.m. to Dom-

parar on the Nite road. Numbers of pack sheep and yaks on the way to Daba. Rather dirty camp and very little water. I cursed Mukhan Singh on every occasion and nearly made him weep. Rained, and got very cold in evening.

" Monday 10. Very cold night, froze hard. Some beast of sorts walked off with *ovis ammon* skin from outside my tent. Marched 7.15 a.m. to Changlus over quite a good road. Nice camp by a river. Burrel ground quite close but I shall move camp about two miles nearer to-morrow. Taught Wazir how to make ' spotted dog ' (roly-poly pudding). Shall have it to-night. Good preparation for a day's shooting. It is beginning to get a bit cold up here and I find that with it comes a disinclination to wash.

" Tuesday 11. Had a most disappointing day. Left camp at 4.30 and went to a large *nullah* and at once spotted burrel. After a tremendous climb I got a shot, but only lengthways as they would have got my wind if I had moved around for a broadside shot ; missed and they went off fast. After a long walk I came up with them again and after much trouble got a very easy shot but only wounded one—lot of blood—followed him up but he got on to bad ground. Had a most perilous climb down to a bed of *nullah* and then when wading a torrent fell down and got soaked. Camp was moved nearer. Came on to rain ; fed up. My watch has gone wrong and Wazir has run a peg into his eye.

" Wednesday 12. Blew a gale all night which seemed to have a good effect on me, as I slept well all night for a change. Started at 5.30 a.m. Beastly cold. Walked all over the hills but not

a sign of burrel. Shot a large game bird called a 'yawal'—plugged him sitting, with a rifle. Have run out of meat so I am existing on *dal* and rice (Indian native dish) which is jolly good. Sent Hurri back to camp to-day for talking about 'road' instead of '*rusta*' (vernacular). He knows about three words of English and will air them on every possible occasion.

" Thursday 13. Did not move until 8 a.m. Marched to Jindu one mile below the Nite Pass, awful wind blowing and raining, so rather unpleasant.

" Friday 14. Snowed a good deal in the night. Crossed Nite Pass into India again. After very steep ascent got on top of Pass, then a mile of level in the teeth of a howling gale and over large boulders; never so glad as when we got to the other side. Steep but not bad descent for about 1,000 ft. This pass is just under 17,000 ft. Camped at Patalpari at 2 p.m. Have run out of sugar, cooking butter, flour, only *ata* (coarse native flour), milk, meat, except for small pigeon which I shot, and only two days' porridge.

" Saturday 15. Sent on Hurri to Bampa to get things ready. Marched to Goting about 8 miles. I think this is the very worst bit of road I have been over, through a narrow *nullah* over rocks and across snow bridges; the yaks got along wonderfully quickly and we were in camp by 12.30 p.m. We came down hill the whole day so the camp is nice and warm comparatively. *Dal* and rice for breakfast, tiffin and dinner. I think I should get tired of it if I were without meat much longer. It rained a good deal last night; shows we are getting into monsoon area again.

" Sunday 16. Moved at 7.30 a.m. A most

perfect day with a lovely view of the snows all round. Had a long march to Bampa over very bad road and the yaks did not get in till 1.30 p.m. Got quite hot and I don't wonder, for from Goting to Bampa is a descent of 4,500 ft. Got my mail at Bampa but only two English mails instead of four. I hear the road is down so the runners can't get through. Paid off yak men, which cost me 140 rupees for twenty-six days. I hear that a report has been sent to the commissioner, so there will be hair flying when I get back."

CHAPTER IX

KASHMIR

AFTER the successful termination of his Tibetan trip, Leachman returned to his normal duties as Station Staff Officer in Naini Tal.

With the good fortune that favours the bold, his escapade into Tibet was overlooked by those in authority. They were the more inclined to view his action leniently since he had confined himself entirely to *shikar* and to visiting only those wild regions where game existed, instead of trying to pry into the secrets of that mysterious land. Moreover, the Tibetan authorities themselves made no representations regarding his visit, and this fact also made it easier for the "powers that be" to condone his offence.

His appointment as Station Staff Officer was due to terminate in January, 1906, but owing to the difficulty of finding a suitable successor he was requested to stay on for a further three months. He returned to his regiment in April of that year. He was immediately detailed to undergo a musketry course at Changla Gala in lieu of that which sickness had prevented him from taking at Pachmari.

A day in the train to Rawal Pindi, a forty-mile drive in a *tonga* from there to the hill station of Murree, and a twelve-mile ride on horseback brought him to his destination on April 30. The following day work started in earnest, and very strenuous he found it. The course was a severe one, as they always are; six hours' instruction in the intricacies

of the rifle and machine gun necessitated an almost similar expenditure of time on intensive private study, for it was a point of honour with all officers attending to do their utmost to pass with distinction. In a letter home shortly after his arrival, in which he described the nature of his work, he grumbled at the cold, for the snow still lurked in the hollows of the hills and the nights were chilled from the winds from the nearby glaciers. This seems strange, since he had but lately been exposed to the intensive cold in the high altitudes in Tibet without making a protest. This contrariness is typical of his nature, which was capable of enduring any discomfort encountered on an undertaking of his own, but which reacted violently against the lesser ills experienced during a normal existence.

No sooner was the course concluded, and in spite of the fact that a rest was badly needed, than Leachman immediately set off on a *shikar* trip into Kashmir, which necessitated still greater exertions on his part than those recently endured. Having made up his mind on his venture he wasted no time either in starting or *en route*. The course concluded on June 30, and the same night he rode to Murree where, first having sampled the delicacies provided by Ahran's famous restaurant, he offered himself as a sacrifice to the fleas which, he informs us, the Curzon rest-house contained in generous numbers.

At dawn on July 1 he left Murree, accompanied for part of the way by Captain Butler. A drive of sixty-four miles brought him to Gahri for the night, after lunching at Kohla at the crossing of the Jhelum river.

On July 2 he breakfasted at Uri and, after a drive of ninety-three miles, reached Srinagar, the renowned and lovely capital of Kashmir. Here, as so often happens nearer home, his full enjoyment of the

beauty of the surroundings was marred by the behaviour of those who greeted him. All the ruffians in the state appeared to be present for the sole purpose of squeezing from his reluctant purse every "pice" their cunning could extract, so that the resentment he felt in his heart clouded the beauty which awaited his appreciation. In spite of the other attractions of this celebrated resort he did not delay, but left the city the following morning, in the glory of the dawn, on a houseboat and glided down the smoothly flowing Jhelum which wound amidst lotus and the willow and mirrored on its unruffled surface the "perfect and utterly lovely scenery."

Sunbul was reached in the evening and here he disembarked just when the snow-capped mountains received their golden benison from the setting sun.

At daybreak next morning he was off again with six ponies for the transport of himself and his baggage, a number of coolies, a cook, and a *shikari*—a sufficient retinue for the task in hand.

The little cortège wound its way amidst a sea of cherry-blossom, from which, at intervals, there arose islands of mulberry trees watered by bubbling and sparkling streams. In the distance, towering up into the blue heavens, the glistening snow-clad peaks beckoned the traveller to hasten from the warmth and loveliness that surrounded him into their cold and majestic embrace.

At Mamur the first stage of his expedition proper commenced. Here the level, blossom-filled plains rose steeply towards the mountains and fir forests bordered the meadows. That night the full moon with dramatic mastery crept slowly up the vault of heaven from behind the curtain of the snows. First the stars were swept from the sky by her attendant beams, so that she might ride unrivalled in the heaven. From the earth indiscriminate shadows

were brushed aside and, when all was in readiness, and man and beast waited breathlessly in the hush of expectancy, the moon rose over the barrier of the snows and flooded the scene with the unchallenged splendour of her glory. No wonder that Leachman gives this scene a special emphasis in his diary.

Two days later, the road climbing steadily all the while, he reached the summit of the Zoji La Pass. When his eyes rose above the highest point, 11,300 ft. above the level of the sea, they beheld the full sublimity of the country which he was to explore. Chain upon chain of mountain ranges stretched in a curving semi-circle of silver peaks and shimmering glaciers from east to west. The poplar-clad slopes and the fertile plains behind him now gave place to stunted vegetation in keeping with the harshness of the surroundings and the thinness of the stony soil. He stayed but a few moments on the summit of the Pass, to rest himself after the long climb and to enjoy the noble panorama his eyes beheld, before starting once more ; nor did he pause upon his road until he reached Matyan twenty-six miles away. Here he met two other officers engaged upon the same mission as himself. His feet were suffering from the long march over stony ground—for the ponies could not be ridden over the greater portion of the way—but he still pressed forward, his eagerness to reach his destination dulling the pains he suffered. At Dras, twelve miles farther on, he changed his jaded beasts for fresh ones. Here the country in general became more rugged and very bare ; but abundant and fruitful streams fed terraces of corn, now emerald green, which gave smiling happiness and prosperity to the village in their midst. A mass of yellow roses smothered the hillside in a saffron cloud, and a large number of jackdaws, which love the pure air of high altitudes, added a humorous

touch to the scene with their insolent looks and mocking cries. That night he pitched camp at Dundal, seven miles farther on, so ending a magnificent day's march totalling just on fifty miles. When the nature of the country is taken into consideration, this was indeed a fine performance. But the *shikari*, whose stamina was unequal to such strenuous progress, or whose heart failed at the prospect that still lay before him, showed signs of pretended sickness. This faint-heartedness earned for him a contemptuous note in Leachman's diary: "rather a swine." During the next three days ninety miles were covered to Tholti via Karbu.

Here the *shikari*'s ill humour contributed to a disturbance of the peace of those quiet regions. A heated argument over the supply of coolies with the headman of the village, led to an exchange of blows. The supporters of both sides joining in the fray, Leachman hurled himself into the midst of the mêlée and, with his fists, impartially administered punishment on the combatants so that peace was quickly restored. But the next morning no coolies appeared. In irate haste Leachman abandoned his baggage and made for the fountain head of authority in the person of the Rajah of Tholti, who resided some fifteen miles distant. This "small but decent man" was "bully-ragged" by the *shikari* till, to escape the latter's importunities, he issued orders that coolies were to be forthcoming without further argument, and that they were to bring the baggage with all speed. In its absence Leachman borrowed a blanket from the Rajah's Prime Minister and with this meagre covering, passed a chilly and fretful night.

The next day the *tahsildar* (village head man) was sent for and to him the Rajah's commands were communicated by the Prime Minister who, desiring to propitiate Leachman, served him with a gorgeous

"pillau," but by evening no baggage had arrived. Leachman's reaction to this neglect filled everyone with the greatest dismay and created no little uneasiness: "I think that they are all a little alarmed at what I may do," he jotted down in his diary. "I certainly will create hell." The effects of the pillau had evidently worn off, and the *tahsildar*, now ruefully regarded a situation which boded nothing but ill for him. Abandoning his appeasing culinary arts, he applied himself to more practical means for setting this very irate officer upon his way. The result was that the coolies and baggage were all present the next day at noon, when a start was at once made by a five-mile march to Surmik. The upper waters of the Indus were crossed on a skin raft on July 14 at a point between Surmik and Tokins. Then through lovely villages his march led Leachman to Dowani and down to the Shyok River, at a point opposite Khapaluto, which he crossed once more on a skin raft after considerable delay.

Leachman was now close to his shooting ground, but he was beginning to feel unwell, nor did his condition improve for a week. He was, in truth, really unfit to travel, yet he continued to press forward with an obstinate fixity of purpose, and without curtailing the length or speed of his marching. By the time he reached Abdan he was utterly weary and was in sore need of a rest, yet, because the game he had come so far to seek were reported to be at hand, he climbed for 6,000 ft. up the Zinka Nullah, till he reached a height of 15,000 ft. His pertinacity was rewarded, for he found the herd and, propitious omen, after a long and patient stalk, with his first shot, killed one whose horns measured thirty eight and a half inches. He thought that he had badly hit two more. His men were sent to search for them the next day while he himself, after a long

climb in a wild snowstorm, shot another which proved too small to keep as a trophy. The following day, however, one of the beasts he had wounded was brought in. Its horns measured thirty-nine inches and were so closely set together as to suggest a deformity.

On July 21 he descended the *nullah* to seek fresh ground. This proved a most tiring day, for the mountain torrent which sprang from the head of the *nullah* had to be crossed no less than twenty times. The following day, however, he made up for lost time by marching up the Shyok river to Machha and thence to Tommus, where he was called in to treat a case of Bright's disease—diabetes, and naturally found himself at a complete loss what to do.

On the 25th news was brought to him that a herd of ibex had been located high up in the Lonchen *nullah*. It was necessary to get well above them—for ibex are difficult to stalk from below, so, taking only blankets with them, they spent the day circling the herd with great caution, and climbing the precipitous sides of the *nullah* until a point was reached high up the cliff above the herd. At sunset, as is their custom, the ibex began to climb to the higher ground in preparation for their night's rest. In this manner they came within range.

This careful and well-planned stalk brought its reward, for Leachman bagged one of thirty-seven inches and wounded another, which was brought in by the coolies two days later and proved to be the largest head of the season; its horns measured forty-six and forty-nine inches respectively. He considered this success to be a very nice birthday present and wrote a cheerful entry in his diary: "I am lucky in *shikar* if not in other things." On this auspicious day, too, he wrote to the girl he loved to tell her of his good fortune, for his hopes had not

yet been shattered. He had just received two letters from her, containing news of such importance, as merited an entry in the "big diary." Where this valuable record is, unfortunately, no one knows, so that the nature of this news, like so many other matters connected with his life, will never be known.

Two days later he was back in Abdan which he found full of "awfully pretty women," but he had some difficulty in reaching the place, for the road was broken, and could only be crossed after a dangerous and difficult climb, during which ropes had to be employed.

Here he spent a day stalking "shapoo," a large horned sheep, and succeeded in wounding one which the coolies brought in later and whose horns measured twenty-seven inches.

Thence the march was continued to Huldî, set in a frame of gigantic snow-clad peaks and vast glaciers, from which icy torrents leapt to the great valley below in their haste to contribute their quota of life to the mighty Indus, which would pour out this blessing on to the arid plains of India, a thousand miles away.

At dawn the following day he climbed the Hucha *nullah* to Sulling. On this march, which started while the stars were still shining, he witnessed the unforgettable sight of the full splendour of the dawn breaking on "the roof of the world." He reached a spot where his eyes could sweep over an endless expanse of mountain peaks, which, in the chill hour before the sun rose, seemed in the uncertain light like icebergs set in some vast arctic sea, inanimate and comfortless. The last star paled from the sky. For a while nature held her breath while the night breeze died away and a hushed stillness made of the heart's beat a throbbing drum. Away to the east, a thin golden thread circled the horizon, reflecting its

gleam on the highest peaks, which flamed like beacons lighted to herald the rising tide of dawn, which now swept forward to his very feet, quenching the fires it had lighted on its way, engulfing the mountains and flooding the valleys till the whole world he looked upon shone bright with life.

Refreshed and elated with this moving spectacle he pressed on to Dawani, covering thirty miles.

On August 3 he climbed to Shinkar, 13,000 ft. in altitude, and here, with a shot which gave him infinite pleasure, he bagged another "shapoo," with horns measuring twenty-four inches. Two days later he crossed the Thall La Pass, 16,000 ft. in height, and from this tremendous elevation dropped steeply down to Shigar, one of the most beautiful places in this fairyland of loveliness.

On August 7 he again crossed the Indus and from now onwards each day presented him with a scene more beautiful than the last. A fresh and enchanting panorama of lake or river or glen was daily presented to him for his appreciation. He was a worthy recipient of these favours, for no one loved beauty, either of nature or of the human form, more than did this "muddy-minded soldier," as he once called himself. So keen was his perception of what was beautiful, that ugliness in any form drew forth the strongest epithet from his tongue or pen. It nauseated him, and the adjectives he uses expresses more clearly, than does anything else, the gulf which lay between his conception of these two extremes.

The river Jhelum was "perfectly and utterly lovely," and Shigar "unutterably beautiful"; but St. Vincent was "a barren and beastly place," and Karachi "a filthy hole."

A long pull from Shigar brought him up the Bunji La to camp just on the Kashmir side. Here it was bitterly cold and, in spite of the low temperature,

infested with mosquitoes. Passing through superb scenery he reached Gunais on the 11th, and two days later crossed the Rajchangan Pass. Here, breasting the final rise, he saw the Wular lake shining like a massive shield of burnished silver far below and the nature of the scene made him stop dead in his tracks and gaze in awed immobility at the sublime spectacle.

At Minwara, the next halt, he reached the house of his cook, by whom, with his charming and natural kindheartedness, he permitted himself to be entertained. The proud menial acted the host and lavished upon his guest his hospitality—poor in ingredients maybe, but rich in kindness. An astonishing number of cucumbers and mulberries were consumed with outward gusto by the considerate guest who, with great fortitude, washed the repast down with large cupfuls of strong salt tea.

This meal provided the climax to Leachman's expedition. One more march through Gandarbal brought him back to Srinagar. He pitched his camp in the Chenar Bagh. His return to civilization was signalled by an influx of "sellers and swine of all sorts," consequently he was in ill-humour when he visited the local taxidermist, whose exorbitant terms, added fuel to the smouldering fires of his resentment. The final settlement of accounts with the *shikari* fanned his passion to a blaze which is faithfully reflected in his diary for that day: "I think the Kashmiri Hindoo is the most loathesome beast I have ever seen and the Musulman little better."

He might easily have taken a rest among the beauties of Srinagar, or travelled back in easy steps to Murree by tonga; but his energy would not permit him to make so easy an ending to his trip.

On August 17 he left Srinagar, accompanied by his cook and a single coolie, for an eighteen mile march to Ramli. Through pleasantly wooded

country he passed by Shapien and Dalzi, a total of twenty-four miles. At the latter place he visited the famous Haribul falls, making a wide detour to do so; for he was a keen and discriminate traveller and never omitted to visit any place of interest if it was within striking distance of his line-of-march. Often he added many miles to his journey in order to pass through country which he knew by repute to be worth a visit.

On August 20 he crossed the Pir Panjal Pass at an altitude of 11,500 ft. and breakfasted at an old Mogul *serai* called Aliabad, camping for the night in the beautiful gorge at Chitta Pani. The next day he travelled down the river which thundered down the gorge, which he had to cross no less than twenty-two times before he reached Bharamgala. This difficult march well rewarded him for his trouble for he describes the scenery "as the finest I think I have seen," which was indeed high praise considering his recent wonderful experiences.

On August 22, on reaching the summit of Rattan Pir, he saw India itself spread out like a map in front of him. Immediately before him the rock-strewn road wound down through pine forests. Beyond these the scrub-covered foothills stretched to the borders of the plains thirty miles away. This vast level stretched away to the yellow dust-laden horizon over a hundred miles distant. At the spot where he stood, a cold and refreshing wind was blowing. Out over that flat expanse, which had been baked for four months by the fierce Indian sun, the earth was steaming under the rains, and the prospect of descending into that cauldron was not pleasant to one who had spent two months among the snows of Kashmir. Still he had reaped the benefit of his enterprise, for he was now in perfect condition and in a state to endure the trying climate

of the plains at this time of the year. It now began to rain in earnest, and his descent to the Thanni Mandi was only accomplished after wading through water for the greater part of his journey. Thence he proceeded to Rajawi where the *dāk* bungalow was the pavilion of an old palace which was "perfectly lovely," while the town on the other side of the river was "very beautiful."

Finally on August 27 he crossed the Adita and reached Bhimba in stifling heat. Here he paid off his coolies and packed his baggage on to *ekkas* for Gujerat. His trip was over.

Having now accomplished two creditable journeys, one in Tibet and the other in Kashmir, Leachman had proved himself to be a gifted traveller. He had gained useful experience, and had shown himself, in spite of a natural fieriness of temper, to be both sympathetic to the people of the countries he visited, and anxious to understand them. The loafers and touts of the towns exasperated him, but for the hardy mountaineers he had a great liking and admiration. He took great pains to learn something of their language and habits, and made many notes on their customs and ways of living. All this proved that, although *shikar* was an objective and a pleasure, his two journeys were not undertaken merely to kill game. He had a passion for travel and he was training himself for more serious and more ambitious work. His comments on the scenery showed a fine and sensitive mind and, as has been stated, he would go out of his way to seek the beautiful. To his followers he was kindness itself; but if he felt himself ill-treated, or cheated in any way, he would not hesitate to mete out the severest punishment. Above all he displayed one quality which is the first essential in any difficult or hazardous undertaking: a determination which overrode all obstacles. He

subdued his own physical infirmities. He led his followers with an impetuosity which compelled them forward in spite of their fatigue, and he never permitted the inclemency of the weather to stay his progress. From now onwards, although he was a keen and conscientious soldier, regimental life had small attractions for him. He now felt himself competent to undertake tasks which could provide a real outlet for his energy, fulfil a cherished desire and serve the land he loved.

CHAPTER X

TESTING THE GROUND

ON his return from Kashmir, Leachman resumed his regimental duties at Ambala. He stayed there for the five months which remained, before he was to enjoy his first leave home since he had come out to India four years previously.

He would now be able to carry out the plans he had formulated the previous January, to travel to England overland from Basra. To do so would mean that his journey home would take two and a half months instead of a fortnight, but already Leachman's mind was occupied with the Middle East. The reason will be made clear later. He was working on a definite plan and was educating himself systematically to carry it out. With great pains he read up both the ancient and modern histories of the lands which lie between India and the Mediterranean, and through a portion of which he was now to pass for the first time. He had a clear and analytical mind and a wonderfully retentive memory. He was a discriminate reader. He discarded the unessentials of what he read, and retained in his memory only such facts as he thought would be of practical use to him to gain an understanding of the people with whom he would come into contact, the forms of government under which they existed, and their potential military value.

From now onwards Leachman's journeys assume

an importance totally lacking from those he had so far undertaken. It is important to emphasize this fact, for few have realized the real purpose which lay behind his actions over that period of his life which commences in January, 1907. Many regarded Leachman merely as an intrepid explorer and a dauntless adventurer. Few recognized that his explorations were not undertaken merely to put new places on the map ; but to place at his country's disposal knowledge and information which would serve and assist her. The hazardous life he led, was not endured in order to punish a recalcitrant sheikh, or to bring an evil-doer his just deserts, or to gain fame for himself ; but for the security and even the salvation of those who were carrying out the Empire's work. When these facts are realized the story of his life from now onwards has an absorbing interest, and the self-sacrificing heroism of this great-hearted Englishman stands revealed.

On the evening of January 30 Leachman boarded the train at Amballa and commenced "a most disgusting journey" through Rajpura, Bhatindu, and Samosata to Karachi, which he reached on February 1. This important strategical line passes through the sandy deserts of Bikanir. He found it impossible to shut out the clouds of sand particles raised by the rush of the train. Through every cranny of the ill-fitting doors and windows, the grit forced its way till the whole interior was smothered.

His night's rest was disturbed by natives seeking to exchange the sardine-like packing, for which they had paid, for the more spacious luxury of his own carriage, and these had to be ejected by "more or less violent methods." Knowing our man, we may well imagine which of these comparatives more justly fits the description. Leachman never did

anything half-heartedly, and when he was angry everyone within hearing knew of it, especially the recipient of its force.

At Karachi, although he visited the Staff offices at an hour he considered normal, he found nobody there, for it seemed that no work was started before 11 a.m. He himself usually rose soon after dawn and his opinion of these easy-going methods was hardly complimentary. He then proceeded to the offices of the British India Steam Navigation Company to receive his steamer ticket, and here his wrath knew no bounds and he "became pale with passion," for Thomas Cook had made an error in his booking, so that the boat by which he was to travel would only take him as far as Bushire, instead of to Basra. However, there was now no remedy, so he went on board the S.S. *Bulimba*. Here his ruffled feelings were immediately smoothed by the kindness of her commander, Captain Bamber, who made him free of the first-class accommodation, in spite of his having a second-class ticket. From his superior position on the upper deck he gazed down upon a closely-packed mass of "very smelly steerage passengers of every nationality, Baluchi, Arabs, Jews, Christians, African negroes, etc."

On February 2 Pasni was reached. Through this small port passed the telegraph line from Karachi to the Gulf. A fierce wind, driving heavy squalls of rain before it, blew that night and, as happens in the Gulf, in an incredibly short time a heavy sea was running, so that he had no thought for breakfast the following morning.

Into the raging sea, when they reached Gwadar later on in the morning, a boatman dived, not to save life, which would have appeared to be the only excuse for such temerity, but to recover an oar which had fallen from a lighter. Leachman gazed

round him at other faces to share the wonder depicted in his own, but, to his astonishment, no one took the slightest notice. This was his first experience of witnessing the wonderful swimming powers of the maritime natives of the Gulf.

His knowledge of history added to the pleasure of his new experience, for he recalled the march of Alexander the Great, whose conquering army had passed along those very shores over 2,000 years previously, while Niarchus, his admiral, based on the Indus, sailed these selfsame seas to supply his general and guard his sea flank.

The famous and ancient port of Musqat was reached on the 5th. He called upon the British Political Agent, Major W. G. Grey, and was greatly interested in the mixed population of the port, consisting of Arabs, Baluchis, Hindustanis, Persians, etc. He made a special note of the fact that the French and Americans had consulates in the town, and that the former had recently attempted to secure a coaling station in the neighbourhood.

The rocky cliffs were inscribed with the names of visiting war-vessels, "with a Russian cruiser's name much to the fore, of course."

Finally, there occurs the remark in his diary that "Musqat is ruled by an independent Sultan who at present is friendly to us"; but he had little faith in the sincerity of this sentiment which was due, in his opinion, to the presence of gunboats.

All these terse entries in his diary show clearly how his mind was working. He was not a tourist, but a military and political student. He was gauging the importance of the places he visited from the two viewpoints. The "of course" at the end of his comment on the artistic efforts of the crew of the Russian cruiser shows that he was keenly aware of the attempts of the Russians to gain control of

Persia, and seek the fulfilment of the cherished dream of Peter the Great to obtain an outlet to the Gulf. Nor must his comment of the unstable nature of the Sultan's friendship escape our special notice. From his South African days he believed that the security of British interests could be maintained by one method only, and that was by a practical demonstration of her inflexible purpose to maintain them. His own conduct was the individual's application of a national principle.

On return to his ship he was "horrified" to find ten missionaries of the American Dutch Reformed Church on board. His consternation was not due in any sense to a dislike of missionaries, but to a very lively fear that he might unwittingly shock them.

At Hormuz, now so dejected-looking, he recalled its past splendours and its magnificent city and noted laconically that its sole remaining claim for special notice, was its trade in red oxide.

At Bandar Abbas he recalled the trouble which had occurred two years previously over the location of the telegraph station. "The British," he wrote, "wanted it built at the Consulate, which is some way out of the town, but the Persians started building it near the town; so a force of bluejackets was landed and pulled down the place. The difficulty has now been solved by building a new Residency nearer the town."

With the fact in his mind that "it is the intention of the Russians to make this place the terminus of their, at present, phantom railway," he turned his soldierly attention to its vulnerability and judged that the neighbouring islands of Hormuz, Kishm, etc., would have to be fortified in order to make it secure. Nor did he neglect the commercial aspects of the places he visited. Indeed, he made very

careful inquiries as to the state of trade, its nature, and the routes it followed, and observed that Bandar Abbas was the terminus of an important trade route into Persia, and that owing to recent Customs regulations of the Persian Government the trade of Musqat and Dabai was on the increase, a fact recognized too late by British merchants.

At Bahrein the ship anchored a long way out, owing to the fact that the coralline sea-bed forms a shelf only a few feet beneath the surface of the sea for a considerable distance round these important islands. Here the missionaries left, "rather to our relief, though they are a decent lot." Indeed the Gulf owes to these heroic, self-sacrificing people a debt of lasting gratitude.

Seen from the distance at which the ship lay, Leachman described the town as being singularly hideous. Although a whole day was spent there, he did not go ashore but gleaned as much information as he could from the representative of Messrs. Grey, Young and Co., who came on board and who "was very sore on the subject of the Consuls we send up the Gulf; he says that they have no commercial knowledge and try to gain none. . . . He also says they don't try to learn Arabic." In this, however, his informant was wrong, for Major Prideaux, who was at this time Political Agent at Bahrein, was, in fact, a good Arabic scholar and one whose knowledge of the Gulf and its people was profound.

On February 12 Leachman reached Bushire, and for the first time, but by no means the last, he saw the whole of the Persian Navy concentrated in the harbour. It was then, he records in his diary, commanded by a Persian, although previously it had been commanded in turn by a Russian, a German, and an Englishman, who had all left because they could get no pay. The Royal Indian Marine vessel

Lawrence was also in the harbour, having been placed at the disposal of the Resident, then Major, but now Major-General Sir P. Z. Cox, whom Leachman did not meet, but who one day would be his chief and who had such great influence in Arabian affairs.

At Bushire he transferred to the S.S. *Kola*, the direct mail-boat for Basra which, after having some difficulty in forcing its way over the soft mud of the Fao bar, entered the Shatt-al-Arab and was soon speeding up the river between low banks covered with date palms.

Muhammara, the capital of what was then an independent little state ruled over by a sheikh who was, as his fathers had been, a staunch friend of Britain, was passed in the afternoon, and Basra was reached at eight o'clock in the evening.

Inquiring, as usual, into the why and wherefore of everything, Leachman learnt of one of the German methods for doing business and buying influence at the same time. "They pay the Turkish port doctor one hundred rupees on every boat and give Turkish gentlemen who may wish to go round to Mecca or Cairo free passages. This is the Hamburg-America line."

Leachman and his fellow-passengers, one of whom was a French general, had now to suffer a five days' quarantine on an island a short way downstream from the town. For this forced imprisonment a fee of seven shillings a day was charged with an additional three rupees a day for food. Leachman found the food most peculiar, and the entertainment more extraordinary still, for some small boys came and made "most indecent gestures" to the French general, to his very evident delight.

On February 20 the five days were up when "various doctors, policemen, and other thieves

arrived," and after extracting the utmost they could extort, released the wretched internees.

After wandering about to find a resting place, Leachman was invited to partake of hospitality by one Dods, of the firm of Stephen Lynch, "and his ripping little wife." For three days he remained in Basra, and during these three days he laid the foundation of his Arabian work. He made his usual exhaustive inquiries regarding the place. He visited, in spite of pouring rain, which converted the roads and paths into quagmires of mud, the forty Europeans, English, Russians, Germans, French, etc., residing in the suburb of Ma'qil. From here he made excursions into Ashar, the port of Basra, and to the city itself by passing up the Ashar creek in a native boat. His keen eye for beauty, in whatever guise, made the trip one of special pleasure; and as his boat glided along the muddy waterway he found it "really very lovely though filthy, with date groves and funny old houses" jutting out over the water, which gave a romantic setting to an otherwise squalid scene. All the time his active mind was noting every detail which might later prove of use. Everywhere he went he asked questions in the curious manner he always adopted when seeking information—indolently, as if he was talking to himself rather than to his companion, who on parting would not realize that his stock of information had been completely sold out to this drawling visitor.

Even at this early stage in his wanderings Leachman's diaries are very guarded regarding important matters, but extremely outspoken with respect to individuals. Thus Mrs. Dods was "a little ripper and jolly good fun"; but an individual he found on the river steamer which was to take him to Baghdad he described as "a peculiarly poisonous fellow, an ex-engineer at Karachi, a loathsome swine."

On this, his first trip up the Tigris, he was carried by the *Calipha*, whose commander, Cowley, was destined to die winning a V.C. The whole European population of Basra came to see Leachman off, for even during his short stay he had become extremely popular and his new friends flocked to bid him farewell. Their like for him was in every sense sincere, and such was his charm and loveliness that he retained their friendship until his death many years later. So with the well-wishes of everyone he started at eventide on his "river trip" of 280 miles to Baghdad.

He has given a very brief description of this journey, but we know from later events that, while daylight lasted, he made mental pictures of all he saw, and so clear were these that he retained them unblurred for many years on the mirror of his mind. He awoke next morning to find the steamer passing through "the reputed site of the Garden of Eden" and from here the journey continued through miles of palm groves and vast swamps. Of the more or less Bedouin inhabitants of the many villages on the banks, all the men and youths carried rifles of sorts, as far as he could see mostly breech-loaders.

"The men . . . wander about stark naked without so much as a loin-cloth. The steamer with a barge to carry cargo on each side, scrapes along the bank and sticks, and then bumps into the other side. Amara (reached on the 24th) is a very beautiful sight with the palm trees on both sides of the river and a bridge of boats across it. It is the home of the Sabeans, an extraordinary sect of people who are sometimes called followers of St. John the Baptist. From here onwards there are Bedouin villages, whose inhabitants amuse themselves by levelling their

rifles at the Europeans on the boat. There are distant views of the mountains of Pasht-i-Kuh. Then Kut-al-Amara is passed, beyond which the men do not seem to carry rifles and are rather more civilized and, therefore, of poorer physique. Wheat and liquorice are the chief products of the countryside, and further on the great arch of Ctesiphon its outstanding monument."

His first acquaintance with the city of the Caliphs started in an ill manner. He had trouble with the hotel proprietor "and various other forms of swine," and he longed for India again where such incivility would not have been allowed to pass unchallenged, but here, in the capital of a Turkish province, he realized that it would be politic to stomach these indignities, but he registered in his memory the treatment he had received and he was a man who never forgot a kindness or a wrong.

At the Customs, on disembarking, he had had an illuminating experience of Turkish methods. "The official came up, a portly gentleman. I walked up to him, presented him with a *mejidié* (about 3s.), he salaamed and I took off my kit which contained a rifle and a revolver, both highly dutiable articles. I hear he does the same with everyone." Which fully explains the unsatisfactory revenue the Turkish Exchequer received from this source.

His first task was to engage a servant, which he did through the kindly help of Parry of Lynch's, for the exorbitant wage of four rupees a day for the trip to Aleppo, which was his next objective, and for the return journey.

His next business was to call on the Resident, Major Ramsay, and study the intelligence reports of the Aleppo route. To his disgust he found that there was no information more modern than that compiled

by Douglas in 1896. Finding little of value from these out-of-date records, he visited the bazaars, which impressed him greatly. "They are really wonderful, such as I have never seen in India. They are nearly all covered in and simply mobs of people all over the place. The street is about eight feet wide, but Turkish big people drive through with outriders regardless."

The next day Leachman paid a visit to Kadhimain, going by tramway. An Indian fellow traveller took him up to the roof of his house and from here he had a perfect view of the golden minarets of the Shiah shrine of the Imam Musa Kadhim.

On March 3 a start was made from Baghdad. The river was spanned by a bridge of boats which linked the city with its suburb on the right bank. The previous day a strong wind and dust storm had caused the breaking of the bridge in the middle so that the two portions were swung by the current to either bank, and the Turks were too lazy to join them up again. Leachman had to cross the river in a *quffa* (coracle). This careless indifference on the part of the authorities made him very indignant: "The more I see of Turks the more I loathe them."

After some delay and difficulty in crossing the river, he joined a Dr. Elliot, who was likewise going to Aleppo, and his servant, on the right bank. Here, too, there were awaiting him another servant, who was getting a free trip to Aleppo in return for his services, and three muleteers, and as baggage animals two mules and three pack ponies and two donkeys. A queer collection of beasts but all serviceable and handy.

At every stage a Turkish *zaptieh* (gendarme) joined the party as escort, but these were in truth nothing but an infliction upon travellers. As a protection they were useless and, as representatives

of Turkish authority, an actual menace, for their mulish stupidity and arrogance frequently provoked a scene, which, under ordinary circumstances, would never have arisen.

At Falluja the party passed the night in the khan. This was Leachman's first experience of a caravan-serai. It was packed with Arabs who talked incessantly, with mongrels which barked and quarrelled the whole night long, and with other animals whose combined odours were overpowering. Under such conditions sleep was, to one not yet inured to these conditions, impossible and his diary registers a wretched night.

The following morning they reached the Euphrates and embarked on a *shakhtur*, a rectangular boat constructed of wattles tarred "both within and without," like the ark, with bitumen obtained from Hit further up the river. After a preliminary failure, due to the strong current and strong wind, the river was successfully crossed and Ramadi was reached that evening. Here once more the local khan provided a rest-house, but the virtual absence of dogs made a good night's rest possible.

The following morning, March 6, his vicious pony bit him on the wrist and kicked him in the stomach, a bad beginning for a long day's march, but which, in spite of this double-ended attack, was successfully accomplished, and that same evening they reached Hit, "a fine place on the top of a small hill and in a strong position." This march was one of fifty-five miles, a good distance for donkeys carrying a load to travel.

Here two Armenians tacked themselves on to the party. These wretches had been robbed on the road by Arabs, who had deprived them of every stitch of clothing and all their possessions. Such was the security the Turks provided for travellers,

With this added number they continued their march in heavy rain. They reached Jiba tired and sodden, and were obliged to camp in the open by the riverside.

The next halt brought them to Haditha, a pretty village strung along both banks of the river, and so that there might be no estrangement between the two portions they contributed mutually to cover an island which lay between them.

Here the party had no small difficulty in finding quarters for themselves and their beasts; chickens were summarily ejected from a room, and men and ponies shared its warmth and received a hearty welcome from all manner of lively insects. To add to Leachman's discomfort the cold and the rain had given him a severe cold.

At Khan Fahmi he took a photograph of "a most lovely girl," and at Ana the day following his discerning eye noticed some "very pretty girls of about sixteen and seventeen." In trying to fathom the depths of this remarkable man's nature it is difficult to determine which qualities predominated and influenced his thoughts and actions. Severe, even harsh in his judgments on his fellow-men, he was equally censorious of his own defects. A brief entry the following day provides an example: "Cold better, but temper as usual bad." No one was more acutely aware of his own limitations.

With this severe side to his nature, which does not spare himself, we find a softness, a gentleness, and an appreciation of beauty, whether of nature, or the human form, or of animal, which betrays a sensitiveness and delicacy which would seem to accord ill with his inflexibility and intolerance. It is only later that we receive an answer to this enigma.

At Nahiya on March 11 his party received further reinforcements. An Afghan *mullah* from Kandahar,

on the way to the Mecca pilgrimage, contributed a sanctity to the gathering and "an Arab murderer who has placed himself under our protection," and about twenty other people of different sorts added a touch of worldly spice to this queer conglomeration of travellers. In this manner, like a rolling stone gathering moss as it proceeded, the column reached Qaim, the old boundary post between the Roman and Persian Empires, whose greatness has been blotted out and covered with the sands of oblivion save for an arch-like ruin on a hill and the remains of Sur across the river, valiantly striving to survive the centuries and lead men's imaginations back through the mists of the past to their forgotten glories.

The following day a short march brought them to Albu Kemal, to-day the boundary between the French Mandate and the Kingdom of Irak.

In these parts the natives had a touching belief in the powers of all Europeans to heal, a wonderful tribute to those silent heroes of the Presbyterian Mission, who, wandering fearlessly, spend their lives in healing the poor derelicts of the desert, and have founded the conviction in the hearts of these poor sufferers that all Europeans are capable of relieving them from their ills. Consequently, sick and afflicted arrived in numbers in the afternoon, though unfortunately most left in the same state as they had come ; but the lesson was not lost upon Leachman, who ever afterwards, in his great journeys, took an ample supply of medicines and medical stores and was thus able to carry mercy into places where callousness and cruelty normally prevailed.

Salahiya was reached on the 14th and was left for a long and hot march the next day to Miyadin, past some interesting ruins and a huge castle, which, he was informed, was the ancient Rehoboth.

The climate was now delightful, hot by day, and almost freezing by night, so that marching was more pleasant and sleep assured.

Dair Az Zor was reached on the 16th. The town contained a large population, a good bazaar, a nice khan, and a Turkish doctor to provide Leachman and Dr. Elliot with coffee and beer.

At Tibni, the next stage, they camped "in a lovely green plain by the river, after a furious altercation with the keeper of the local khan, and the *zaptiehs* who threatened us with an impending attack by Arabs, but from what I have seen the *zaptieh* is the lowest, foulest coward on earth and would be a danger more than a protection." But the party risked attack for the pleasure the lovely camping ground afforded. Their choice between beauty and safety was rewarded, for they passed the night safely and reached Madan the following day without mishap.

Then passing Abu Sabkhaya the march, the diary tells us, "lay through very fertile plains sprinkled with masses of Bedouin tents, and dotted with hundreds of camels and many white ones."

At Hammam they encountered another Turkish doctor even more generous than the former and, ably seconded by a *juge d'instruction*, he lavished his hospitality upon them in the form of "much arack (a very potent kind of liquor), a queer dinner, innumerable cigarettes and again much arack, so we went to bed much the worse for wear in the abode of bugs."

At Maskana where "he cured the sick and afflicted," they left the Euphrates to strike straight across country for Aleppo.

The first stage of this section of their journey brought them to Dair Hafar, where the long and rapidly covered journey now told upon his pony,

which was a virtual "crock." Nevertheless, thirty-six miles were covered in a howling gale and ended on March 24 in the Aziziya Hotel in Aleppo itself.

Dr. Elliot retired to bed with a bad chill, while Leachman refreshed the outer man with a good bath and the inner with an excellent dinner, celebrating in solitary state his first successful crossing of the desert. The following day, Longworth, the British Consul, and "a dear old man," entertained him to lunch, together with Mr. Jay and Mr. Loraine, respectively first Secretaries of the American and British Embassies at Constantinople, who were both on their way to Baghdad.

On March 27 he continued on his way by train to Damascus. The journey "was disgusting, especially from Rayak, where I had to change into the narrow gauge and I was crowded in with two fat Turks to a half carriage." On reaching the city he put up at the Victoria Hotel, which he found very expensive, very nasty, and very big and crowded with Cook's tourists.

He was, strangely enough, disappointed with the bazaars which he did not consider very Eastern, but enjoyed "the most perfect view possible of the plain and town of Damascus, which are glorious, from the top of the Salahiya Hill, in the semicircle of snow-clad hills, over which Mount Hermon lords it, meriting the Arabic name 'Jebel al Sheikh'" (Old Man Mountain).

That night "a sort of Englishman named Farli (not very legible) came to see me and says he will take me to Nejd and Kuweit." This is the first hint we have of Leachman's future plans. The next day he left for Beyrout, the Syrian port, and from the Lebanon mountains at a height of 4,000 ft. had a wonderful view of the mountains themselves set in an azure sky, the red-roofed villages on their slopes,

covered with fir trees and terraced with vineyards, to the plains below, and on the edge of the sea the town of Beyrout itself like an island floating in a sea of emerald.

Here he put up at the Hotel Allemand which was, naturally, full of Germans, and contained one awful and verbose Englishman, the vice-consul.

He was greatly struck by the turn-out of the inhabitants, "everyone is most wonderfully neat and well-dressed, and I feel most disreputable in my old suit." He heard from the verbose vice-consul that during the past three months two hundred people had been slaughtered in collisions between Christians and Musulmans—another price the wretched inhabitants paid for Turkish misrule.

On April 2 he embarked on a Khedival Line steamer, the *Prince Abbas*, for a lovely journey up the coast on his way to Constantinople. The most wonderful scenery was framed in snow-clad mountains, glistening brilliantly against a cloudless sky of the brightest blue all the way from Beyrout to Tripoli. At night he suffered greatly from unwelcome bedfellows, amongst whom he did great slaughter, and was very glad to get up on arrival at Mersina. Mersina, seen from a distance in its background formed by the Taurus Mountains, appeared fascinating and beautiful; but a closer inspection revealed it as "a small, very ordinary and nasty town, which bored me extremely in spite of the fact that the hotel provided me with a bill of fare at least two feet long and not at all bad."

On the afternoon of the 4th he continued his journey by rail to Adana, where he was joined by a fellow passenger from the boat, Stuart by name, and together they continued their journey by train to Gulak Bughaz, where two carriages of the "flat bottomed" sort were awaiting them. Starting at

9.30 a.m., they were nearly bumped to bits by a terribly bad road which, however, improved as the hill tract was entered. As the road rose the scenery also began to improve till it attained an inexpressible grandeur and beauty. They were hemmed in on all sides by the snow-clad Taurus Mountains and wound their way through lovely forests through which foaming streams leaped and sparkled till Gulak Khan was reached ; here they spent the night, after passing through a wonderful gorge and completing a drive of fifty kilometres. The accommodation provided was so dirty that Leachman preferred to sleep outside.

The next morning they continued their drive through the Cilician Gates and up the summit of the pass to a height of 4,660 feet, whence they descended through superb scenery to Akpriu, where lunch was taken. They ended a wonderful day at a khan at Ulu Qishla, sleeping in a closed room with lots of natives, which they found rather trying.

At 9.30 a.m. on April 7, Bulgarlu, then the terminus of the Baghdad Railway, was reached, nevertheless they continued their journey by road, in order to see some of the country till Eregli was reached. They had now covered a total distance of one hundred and eighty miles by carriage and they decided to sample the railway once more. That evening they reached Konia and spent the night in the excellent German Station Hotel, which was so well run that Leachman notes " a respect for the Germans," the more sincere for the indifferent accommodation with which the Turks had provided him so far.

They continued their journey early next morning by train to Eski Shehir, passing through Afium Kara Hisar *en route*.

On the next section the rain had washed out the

line in two places, necessitating trans-shipment, but thereafter all went well to Haidar Pasha, which was reached at 8 p.m. on April 9. There a cursory examination of their luggage by the Customs official released them for the ferry which landed them in Europe, at the Galata Budje, in fifteen minutes.

The next night they attended the opera to hear *Rigoletto*, and felt themselves really back in the civilized world.

Having spent three days in sight-seeing, Leachman boarded the Continental express on April 13 and found to his disgust that he had to share his *wagon-lit* with two Germans and a Turk, all of whom objected to fresh air.

His journey, via Adrianople-Belgrade-Budapest, Vienna-Ostend-Dover, was passed without incident, and on April 18, a bitterly cold day, he reached Charing Cross, and within an hour left for Petersfield, having accomplished a journey of seventy-nine days of steady travelling, and having gained valuable knowledge of the future country he intended further to explore.

He remained in England for the summer and autumn and left again for India to rejoin his regiment at Rawal Pindi at the beginning of October.

Leachman reached Rawal Pindi in the first week in November, 1907. Hardly had he got there than he was summoned to Simla on special duty. Exactly what the nature of this duty was does not transpire from any records we possess, but it would appear to have been of a confidential nature, and to have been closely connected with the Middle East, and therefore connected with those countries in which he was taking such a keen interest.

Unfortunately very few of his letters of this period have survived, but it is evident, from those we have, that he was kept extremely hard at

work and that he found his employment intensely interesting.

He reached Simla early in December. At this time of the year practically all the officials, and their wives and daughters, were down in the Plains and the great hill station was practically deserted. It was extremely cold and good skating was to be had; but Leachman, to his great annoyance, was unable to enjoy it owing to a weak ankle. He therefore employed his spare time in the private study of languages. He could not be idle during his waking moments. If he could not use his limbs, he employed his brain, with the same energy he displayed in his sports or travel. His own inclinations are shown in a letter to his sister Mabel, when advising her with regard to his nephew's future :

"How is Jack?" he wrote on December 9, "and what is he going to be? I have made many enquiries out here about engineering. . . . Everyone I ask says that the only thing is to get on to some big work (which is not to be found in England) like the Assouan Dam, and things like that under one of the great engineers, and if a man is worth anything at all, he is sure to get on from that. If not that, I should put him in the army, if not in the Sappers, in a native regiment in India, it is a fine service. The great thing in the Army is languages, and I would cut his Latin very fine, and insist on him being taught French, and if possible, German at the same time. I work many hours a day at German, when I might be employed very much better."

The threat of war with Afghanistan that year brought the civil and military members of the Government post haste back to Simla, far earlier than

was usually the case, and Leachman made up his mind that the occupation of the Afghan capital was the only proper course :

“ The whole place is in an uproar,” he wrote on April 30, “ with rumours of war. A very general idea is that the whole show is backed up by the Amir and that we shall find ourselves in Kabul before long if this cowardly government does what is right, which I suppose it won't. Meanwhile I belong to one of those who stay behind and have all the work, for, whenever a show comes on, it seems to affect everyone all the way through, whether one has anything to do with the part of the world concerned or not. It seems rather a shame to be in office these lovely days. I have not been getting away much before 5.30 or 6 which makes it late to get a bit of tennis. . . . Simla is now full, the Viceroy and Kitchener having come up in a hurry on account of the show.”

War was, happily, averted and in a few weeks life in Simla proceeded normally. Leachman was still being worked extremely hard, but that did not prevent him dancing most of the night when he got the opportunity. By September the season was once more drawing to a close, and the round of gaieties slackened somewhat, a fact which did not suit the energetic Leachman.

On September 23 he wrote to his sister Mabel :

“ I am still having a much too strenuous time ; however, it has been fairly dull lately so I haven't had to stay up all night lately. It is a much duller place than Naini ; at Naini I know I went to fifty-eight dances in the season. Here there have only been thirty-two up to date and we are

nearly at the end of the season. Of course the big people don't do their duty, all following the lead of the Viceroy, who is hopelessly stingy in the way of entertaining. I have had some nice days shooting lately, at least nice days in the country for there is not much to shoot. The great point about the place is the theatre. They have most excellent amateur pieces, really good, which run for a week or so at a time. I enjoy it much. On the Simla stage they don't feel tied down (as other amateurs) to what they say or do, which adds to the excitement."

At the end of the season in October Leachman's term of special duty came to an end and he returned once more to his regiment at Rawal Pindi. Work was not too strenuous, so Leachman flung himself into private study, for he was fitting himself for the great work he felt himself destined to do. In deadly earnest he systematically prepared himself so that he might be fit in all respects to accomplish it. It was work which called for great qualities and proficiency. The qualities he felt himself already to possess. The proficiency he was determined to acquire. As a runner preparing himself for an important race will not neglect any item of his training which may enhance his prospects of victory, so Leachman set himself to study every medium which might make his task less formidable.

In February he wrote to his mother to tell her that he had a really nice and comfortable house to live in and had lots of time for his private labours. He was being pestered, however, by his successor in Simla who asked continually where some phantom file was: "as we had something like 2,000 files in my own section it is a little hard to recall each one. I am quite regardless of his squeaks for help, how-

ever ; I had to find out when I started so he might as well."

In April he went to Calcutta to put in a month's special study in preparation for his examination in Arabic, and it is not surprising to learn that a city life did not suit him, and that in a very short while he was heartily sick of the place.

"It is so hard to get any exercise, for the Calcutta idea of it is to drive solemnly in a landau from 5.30-7.30 along the banks of the Hoogly, which doesn't suit me. I suppose it is too hot to walk, but I feel very fit here from doing it."

Even here he lost no opportunity for exploring.

"On Sunday I went for a jolly trip by launch down the Hoogly about sixty miles. It is a most interesting river, and the shipping in it is wonderful. I am the owner of a Pathan servant, a man from the N.W. frontier, and as he has never seen anything but his own part of the world before he is most interested. Also all these very rude Bengal people are in a mortal terror of him, as they always imagine a Pathan to be a thief and pretty free with his knife. He addresses them all as 'Monkey men.' . . . I am at last progressing a little with my Arabic and I think I may possibly pass, though one never knows."

He passed well and a few weeks later returned to Rawal Pindi well pleased. He found the place too full of bands for his liking and they disturbed him greatly, especially as most of them were extremely bad.

"I really think the bands of the two native regiments here are almost better than the British. Ours is awful just now, but no one cares ; they

talk a great deal about the great things they are going to do with it (like the monkeys in the 'Jungle Book') and then forget all about it next day. They make me tired."

The time was now near when Leachman was to put to practical use the work he had been doing during the past year, for he was about to set out on a journey of exploration through the centre of Arabia. He wished to traverse a portion of the country never previously visited by a white man, and he now felt himself competent to make the attempt. He had received the necessary leave and his preparations were complete.

On November 11, 1909, the day of his departure, he wrote to his mother :

" Just a line to say I am off to-day on my travels. I have been so rushed lately that I did not think I could get off by this week's boat and only found I could manage it late yesterday evening. I packed and put my house in order at a strenuous rate, being at it most of the night. Lay down for a sleep and all my servants did likewise with the result that I was woken up a quarter-of-an-hour before the mail train was due to go, which is at the unearthly hour of 5.30 a.m. I missed it successfully, but I think I shall be able to catch the boat by another mail train. It does not prolong one's life though, that sort of thing, and I am afraid Mildred would not have approved of the treatment meted out to the Aryan brother in the early hours of yesterday morning. . . . I said Saturday night ; I don't know by what class, but probably steerage."

That was the last letter his people received from him for five months

CHAPTER XI

FIRST ARABIAN EXPLORATION 1909-1910

"I SUPPOSE you think I have disappeared for good. I have been away for a long time, but I warned you I could not tell you where I was going as the 'unspeakable one' has a penchant for reading my letters owing to my evil reputation with him. I have been making a great and to a certain extent an unsuccessful attempt to reach the unknown parts of Central Arabia. The Turk for some reason objects to ambitions of this kind so I have had great difficulty in getting away. . . ."

Leachman wrote these words at the beginning of a letter to his mother from Baghdad on April 23, 1910.

Although the journey to which he refers was, on this occasion, unsuccessful, to the extent that he did not reach the goal for which he aimed, nevertheless it was one of outstanding importance and received due recognition. Leachman had been long planning it and, in his thorough way, preparing himself for carrying it out. He had worked at Arabic intensively and, as has been told, had successfully passed his examination in that language. He had already made a preliminary march across the desert in order to gain experience and had carefully studied the somewhat limited literature on Arabia, and had sifted carefully the accounts by past Arabian explorers of their experiences. Such careful preliminary work shows clearly the seriousness of his intentions and the

care and patience he took to fit himself, so far as he was able, for the difficult task ahead. His practical mind and methodical nature did not permit him to minimize the dangers and the physical difficulties which must confront him if he undertook a journey of this description, nor would his thoroughness allow him to neglect any precaution which might aid him in his enterprise.

On November 13 he boarded the S.S. *Kola* at Karachi bound for the Persian Gulf. After leaving Musqat, where he met Lieut. T. C. Fowle of the 40th Pathans, a most capable officer who later became an expert on Arabian affairs, very rough weather was experienced; a howling gale made the passage anything but pleasant, and a great wave flooded the ship and killed a passenger.

On November 16 Leachman reached Bushire and two days later landed at Muhammara, where he was most hospitably entertained by Lieut. A. T. Wilson (later Sir Arnold Wilson, of Mesopotamian fame), who introduced him to a quiet, sturdy, scholarly-looking man who would have passed unnoticed in any society except to a keen observer, who would have noted an unusual personality in the very calmness and quiet assurance of this redoubtable figure. This was E. A. Soane, who had just come through Kurdistan in disguise, formerly a bank official and later patriot, hero, and a sacrifice to devotion to duty. Thus chance brought together for the first time three of the most remarkable men our generation has known, three men who have served England so well, so unobtrusively, that they are either unknown to their countrymen, or their work for a time forgotten. Two are dead. Happily the third lives, and awaits that day which will surely come when England will have need of him again. In his diary Leachman wrote of Soane "as a most interesting man," and of

A. T. Wilson, the greatest of them, if greatness be measured by work which will endure, he said, "he is apparently above himself and has done a great deal of work."

Leachman visited the sheikh of Muhammara, a great friend of England as his ancestors had been before him, whose fine body of armed men pleased Leachman's soldierly eye, but the sheikh's capital he found of little interest.

The Arabic of these parts he rightly judged to be bad, nor could he understand it, which is little to be wondered at. On the third night of his stay he and a large party were entertained by a French merchant, whose guests included "four women of more or less doubtful virtue." He returned at 3 a.m. after a rowdy night and, the following night, reached Basra and stayed at the house of Mackie, of Messrs. Strick and Co. He remained at Basra until November 26, and continued his study of Arabic under the tuition of a Baghdadi, whose dialect was new to him and which he found hard to pick up.

On November 26 he left for Baghdad which he reached on December 2. The Resident, Mr. Lorimer, the author of the *Persian Gazetteer*, the standard work on the Persian Gulf, insisted on his staying at the Residency, where Lorimer and his charming wife made him most happy. Here he met Sir William Wilcox, the famous engineer, whose abiding work in Egypt still bears witness to his marvellous skill as an engineer, and who was now engaged by the Turkish Government on a great irrigation programme in Mesopotamia.

Leachman renewed his acquaintance with many friends and made a lot of new ones, British, Arabs and Turks, for, as was usual with him, he not only had the gift of friendship, but he never lost an opportunity of becoming acquainted with everyone

he thought it profitable to know. His energy and tirelessness enabled him to get the fullest value out of each day, yet left him with sufficient force to share in an evening's entertainment, for his fun and wit assured the success of any party.

The brother of his Calcutta Arabic teacher, Azoo, who died, greatly lamented, early in 1914, came to call upon him and provided him with a "teacher of sorts" and a servant, Haji Ajim, "a Persian who knows nothing." He shot with an Indian nawab of the Oudh family, rode in the desert and increased the scope of his Arabic work by studying with Aziz Azoo and a very old *mullah* called Saiyid Rasan.

Now it will be worth while refreshing our memory with the quotation from the letter to his mother given at the commencement of this chapter, and to watch his method of working. His plans he kept a dead secret, and no one could act a part to such perfection as could this smiling and often inane-seeming young man; yet the Turks were extremely suspicious of him and more than doubtful of his intentions. He was interrogated as to his reasons for visiting Baghdad, but his answers were always the same and delivered with that queer enigmatical smile of his. "The climate suits me to perfection, Baghdad and the district have much to interest me and I have many friends and enjoy their society." So he continued his shooting expeditions, his harmless rides, his roisterous parties, his seemingly inconsequential and innocent behaviour. The Turks continued to watch him closely, yet could detect nothing suspicious in his actions. His next procedure, designed to lull their uneasiness when the time should come for him to leave the city, should be noted. He set out openly on a small tour of sightseeing; but one has not forgotten how innocent were his movements just previous to his dash into Tibet.

On December 14 at 3.45 a.m., he set off, openly, like a nabob in a carriage, for the holy city of Karbela. His coming had been well advertised, and Muhammad Hassan, the British consul, met him eight miles outside the city. The road he had traversed was thick with pilgrims, wending their way to the shrine of Husain and the town itself was glutted with others, for the celebration of the tragic episode connected with the slaughtered saint was about to be enacted. The fact that he was met by a British official gave him an importance which he carefully fostered. He wished to create for himself such a reputation that he could meet the great men as well as the lesser, so that his knowledge might be complete and that he might not be lightly treated. He intended to meet the princes of Arabia in order that he might judge its potentialities and be correctly informed. News travels in Arabia in that speedy and mysterious manner of the East, so that men tell it at the coffee stalls and, as they pass each other without halting, in the desert wastes.

Leachman profited by the lessons he had learnt from the experiences of past explorers, who often received but scurvy treatment in the course of their wanderings, but he had determined that he himself would fare otherwise. So at Karbela he lodged sumptuously at the house of Majid Khan, a Persian prince; he called on the Mutasarrif, Jalal Bey, and the Kurdish colonel commanding the garrison—these last two civilities should be borne particularly in mind—he went for a shooting trip ten miles along the road to Najaf, where he saw the many camps of the Bani Hassan sprinkled about the plains and, most important, learned that two months earlier the Shammar and Anaiza tribes had been in the neighbourhood with fifteen thousand tents.

So innocent, so correct, was his behaviour that the

Turkish officials failed to note that he had perfected his preparations for an audacious move to be carried out under their very noses.

On December 17 a Bedouin passed the Turkish sentry stationed on the Shithatha road, causing no remark, but carrying in his head certain clear instructions and in his *aba* a letter and a suitable recompense from Leachman. On December 18 Leachman continued his progress as a tourist, but left behind him a legacy of friendship and trust. He reached Najaf, the fanatically holy city, in the evening, having travelled miles of dusty road, heavy with deep sand. That road was later to be the eastern boundary of Leachman's kingdom. He called upon the Quaim Maqam, and visited Kufa on the Hindiya Canal, where Ali, the fourth Caliph, lies buried. He inspected the city carefully and was received by the famous Persian *mujtahid*, Saiyid Kadhim Tabatabai. Once more he went on a shooting expedition, this time over the Bani Hassan country towards Abu Sukhan and Ja'ya and returned by night to Kufa. These shooting expeditions, which seldom produced much sport, might seem profitless entertainment, but to a man who never forgot a landmark, they served another purpose; moreover, everyone in the neighbourhood desired to know something of this stranger, who expended so little ammunition but was so pleasant to converse with.

On December 21 he went to Kifi up the Hindiya Canal, taking ten hours for the trip. Here he was met by the local bigwig, "an extraordinary mullah with a glass eye and a black tail coat," but this bizarre garment was downed by the official as a compliment to his guest. Also a representative of the Quaim Maqam of Hilla and the agent of a wealthy Jew of Baghdad, by name Manshim Danyal,

later to be well known to all British officials in the days of the Occupation, met him there. Leachman visited the tomb of Ezekiel, "a horrible building," Birs Nimrud, the traditional site of the Tower of Babel, and returned to Hilla, where he stayed with Ezra the son of Manshim Danyal, thence to Babylon and again back to Hilla, where he visited "a filthy hospital," and the Alliance Israelite School, where "God Save the King" was sung in his honour at dinner that night, all the *élite* being present, including the leading mullah, "a most objectionable person ; he was very rude." His journey, enlivened by some partridge shooting, was continued in this princely fashion to Musaiyib, and so back to Baghdad.

In 1910 little was known of the people or places Leachman visited, and less of the country itself. Is it just coincidence that the celebrities Leachman now met later became our close friends? It would ill serve Leachman's memory to attribute to him results for which he himself would never have claimed the credit, yet one thing is certain : Leachman, in most instances, was the first to gain personal contact with these men of standing, in many cases he was the first Englishman they had met. They never forgot the experience and its influence was felt when England had most need of it, and the links of a chain were forged by him which the force of circumstance could not break.

Until January Leachman's stay in Baghdad consisted of parties and visits to all and sundry, including Daud Bey Daghistani, the son of Muhammad Pasha, the Wali of Mosul, and with this visit another bold adventure was prepared months ahead and Turkish suspicions further allayed. The "inane" Englishman had followed his innocent pursuits, in a manner which advertised his frivolity, until January 13, when he mysteriously and completely disappeared.

His diary, it might seem strange, contained no record of his doings a few days previously, except for one significant entry, in which he records that he spent a day studying maps. Yet the reason for the blank space in his record is easy to explain: his activities were such that to keep a complete record of them would have been dangerous should his diaries get mislaid or stolen by Turkish agents.

As soon as the messenger, who left Karbela with Leachman's letter in his *aba*, had returned with an answer, his mode of living and manner at once changed. He hid himself for three days perfecting his disguise, for he was to visit a section of the Abdar Shammar, one of the great Bedouin tribes of Central Arabia.

Disguised as an Arab for the first time, he stayed one day at Kadhimain. Accompanied by his guide, Khidr Ibn Abbas, he left there late at night, when the city slept, crossed the river unostentatiously with a few companions, and picked up a horse and two Bedouins sent to await him and guide him to the Arab encampment.

Crossing the upper and dry end of the Saqlawiya canal near Khan Muffatish, he was rapidly led to the Arab encampment. Once more his diary is a blank regarding his interview with the Sheikh Abdullah. Happily we know from other sources what these visits portended: he had been quietly negotiating with this sheikh to persuade him to permit him to accompany him to Hail, whither the latter was bound.

Covered by the night he was conducted to the encampment of Sheikh Abdullah of the Aqnar subsection of the Abdar Shammar, consisting of three hundred tents pitched in the vicinity of Shuwaiyib. This was Leachman's first contact with one of the great Bedouin tribes of Central Arabia. Sheikh

Abdullah received him with great kindness and Leachman discussed with him the prospects of getting to Nejd, for he had learnt through his contacts at Karbela that the Abdar tribe were about to journey south to Hail under the leadership of Sheikh Majid Ibn Ajil, who was connected by marriage to Sa'ud Ibn Abdul Aziz Ibn Rashid, the ruling prince of the great Shammar confederation of Hail. Leachman had already prepared the ground for a meeting with Majid Ibn Ajil, who had expressed a willingness to see him. He had been waiting in Baghdad until a favourable opportunity occurred to gain contact with the tribe and had been asked by Majid Ibn Ajil to remain quietly there until the Turkish watch on him had relaxed. The Shammar were allies of the Turks, and Majid had to act with extreme caution in case his reception of Leachman became known. It was considered advisable for Leachman to reach Majid's camp by a circuitous route so that all trace of him might be lost. This stratagem was brilliantly carried out and the Turks never suspected that Leachman would leave via Kadhimain, so that from the very start they lost track of him. The next day he was passed on to the Ma'amuia section of the Zabaid under Sheikh Hazar, and at nightfall reached the encampment of the Abdar Zigant, a force attached to Majid, and the following day reached the camp of Sheikh Majid himself, which was situated at Tall Ibrahim. With him all details of Leachman's preparations for joining him when the tribe moved south were discussed. It was essential that he should be provided with suitable camels. So with Majid himself he rode, still in disguise, to Musaiyib, a small town near the Hindiya Barrage, seeking without success some Aqail camel dealers. This visit to Musaiyib shows Leachman's cool daring and his confidence in

his disguise. The township contained a number of Turkish officials, and, as Musaiyib is on the main road from Baghdad to Karbela, a special watch would be kept there for him.

On the 18th Leachman was back in Baghdad having entered the city at night unnoticed. The next morning, clothed as before, he went about his usual occupations to the annoyance of the Turks, who had of course noted his complete absence, but were at a loss to explain how he had escaped their vigilance or aware of where he had been.

It was essential for Leachman to return to Baghdad to wait till Majid was ready to move. So long as the latter remained within visiting distance of the Turks it would have been extremely risky for Leachman to have stayed with him. His camels had still to be purchased—this Majid sportingly agreed to do—and finally there were his own personal affairs to settle, since he expected to be away for the best part of a year. His unavoidable return, however, increased his difficulties, for his absence had considerably alarmed the Turks, and their watch on his movements was redoubled; but Leachman gave not the slightest indication that he was aware of their surveillance, nor did his behaviour show any sign of another departure. Within two days, however, he suddenly left for Karbela, which he reached by an all-night journey, having once more evaded the Turkish agents' attention. His friends were already there, fully armed, and waiting in Majid's house in the city. Leachman had arranged for camels to be waiting for him outside the town and they were concealed a short distance away, but for a time he was unable to get to them, for he found his every movement dogged by the Turkish police.

His Arab friends, after great difficulty, got into communication with him through a Christian, Aziz

Azoo, and a plan of escape was conceived. Aziz possessed a date garden which bordered a dry and deep canal and another which opened into the main road. At a given time shortly before sunset on January 26, 1910, Leachman openly called on Aziz and was duly tracked to the house by the police, who waited patiently outside the door to the main road. Leachman passed quickly through the garden concealed in the shadows of the trees and through the door which opened on to the canal; moving stealthily along the dry bottom of it he reached some gardens outside the town where his friends, who had come there singly and by different routes, were awaiting him with ten good horses.

It was now quite dark. Hastily getting into Arab kit, Leachman mounted and the whole party sped swiftly into the desert. They made for the Abu Dibbis lake, a large stretch of shallow water which they crossed so that their tracks would be effectually concealed, and then moving with the greatest rapidity, they reached Majid's camp at 2 a.m. Majid had two hundred tents with him, and Leachman was quickly escorted to one at the extremity of the encampment where he remained, quietly awaiting events.

Meantime the Turkish police had waited patiently outside the house of Aziz for four hours, gazing expectantly for the closed door to open and for Leachman's reappearance. But the door remained closed and there was no sign of him, till finally their dull wits suspected that something was wrong, and then, entering the house and finding both it and the garden empty, they realized that he had escaped. The alarm was quickly given, and three parties of mounted gendarmes dashed off in pursuit in various directions, making for Arab encampments known to be in the neighbourhood. One of these parties

actually reached Majid's camp, where they were informed that no one of Leachman's description had been seen. Nevertheless, they searched the camp as well as they were able, but finding no one even resembling him, gave up the search and returned to Karbela to report. But no risks could be taken and he did not intend to give the Turks an opportunity for a second visit. At dawn the next morning the two hundred tents were struck and the tribe moved off in a south-westerly direction, into a vast ocean of undulating desert, and Leachman's first great journey of exploration had begun.

He had great hopes of reaching Hail, the capital of Ibn Rashid, which no one had visited since Baron Nolde had done so in 1893. Indeed, so far as available records show, less than ten Europeans have ever visited the Shammar capital, but Leachman's ultimate goal was the Wahabite capital, Riadh, concealed in the very heart of Arabia. The difficulties which lay before him were greater than he anticipated. It so happened that at this particular time the whole desert was in a turmoil; vast contingents of the Bedouin tribes were everywhere on the move, and a succession of raids and counter-raids were taking place with bewildering rapidity, and, as so often happened in desert warfare, a victory by one party one day would be turned into defeat the next, so that there was a constant ebb and flow of strife, with the tide of success, setting first in one direction and then in another. The long struggle between Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of Nejd, had recommenced with great ferocity. Mubarak Ibn Sabah of Kuweit was an ally of Ibn Rashid, yet apparently had taken up arms on the side of Ibn Sa'ud. The Roalla branch of the Anaiza had defeated the Rashid's forces at Jauf and were now contemplating an attack on the Shammar

capital itself, and Fahed Bey of the Anaiza the biggest Bedouin tribe, was marching south with the greatest force the Anaiza had ever assembled, while the various subsections of the different tribes were actively engaged in less important warfare. Leachman was launched into this maelstrom of disorder which at any moment might engulf his own companions.

The march south, therefore, was undertaken with every precaution and the utmost vigilance was exercised night and day. Their progress was slow and leisurely, their demeanour calm and untroubled and they regarded the outcome of their adventure with stoical indifference. Such stoicism was the natural result of centuries of disorder and of generations of suffering. Indeed the state of affairs which now prevailed was regarded as inevitable and immutable. Arabian explorers of note, such as Doughty, Huber, Alois Musil and others, have faithfully recorded the harshness of desert life. They have suggested no possibility of change. Modern novels and the cinema have vividly portrayed desert unrest, so that the world at large has accepted the fierceness and lawlessness of the desert tribes as an inevitable fact and even considers that the tragedies of desert life add romance to the wild and desolate regions among which the poverty-stricken inhabitants spend their harsh lives.

Yet Providence was fashioning two instruments to change the seemingly unalterable and bring the torch of mercy and humanity to places where the darkness of misery had hitherto prevailed.

Ibn Sa'ud, in that very region towards which Leachman and his companions were slowly and cautiously wending their way, was destined soon to alter the outlook of great contingents of Bedouin tribes in the southern parts of Arabia, while Leach-

man in the north was, by his dynamic personality and generous heart, set on the path of a great and noble reformation.

By February 3 they reached the Wadi Jarathim, a hundred and seven miles from their starting place, and it was here that Leachman made his first great geographical discovery, the Wadi el Khar, the dry bed of a vast ancient river four hundred miles in length which, rising near the oasis of Jauf, originally swept its majestic way between its banks, averaging four to five miles apart to the Shatt-al-Arab. The importance of this geographical feature, which Leachman was the first European to discover, lies in the fact that the channel provides a natural and easy line of communication across Northern Arabia and one where water is easily accessible, either on or under the surface. Leachman himself, at the time he reached the Wadi, was unaware of the importance of his find, and comments but briefly on the matter.

On February 5 they had reached a point forty-three miles further south and camped in the desert proper near Samit. Here a Sulaib, one of the gypsy folk of the desert, whose origin no one knows, and who have some strange means of their own for knowing all that happens in the desert, informed them that Ibn Rashid had raided the Anaiza quite recently, killing one of their sheikhs and capturing some of their horses. This news created some alarm among Majid's following, as the Anaiza might be met in the neighbourhood at any moment, and in a mood to seek revenge for the misfortune they had suffered. In spite of this fact and although they were their traditional enemies, with that curious chivalry found nowhere but in the desert Majid's party were taking some horses along for the Anaiza chief, Fahed Bey Ibn Hadhal. They now moved with redoubled caution, sending out their scouts

well in advance and to the flanks of their line of march. They had good reasons for exercising special care, for the possibility of trouble was the more likely since they were now marching through the heart of a district which belonged, by desert laws, to the Anaiza.

"All this country," Leachman in his article published in the *Geographical Journal* of March 1911, writes, "is in the 'dirat' of the great tribe of the Anaiza, that is to say, they have the grazing and watering rights over it. The Anaiza are the hereditary enemies of the Shammar, but by one of the curious courtesies of the desert an arrangement has been made with the sheikh of the Amarat section of the Anaiza, by which the Shammar with whom I was travelling would be allowed to pass in safety, and there were in fact several of the Anaiza in the camp. In the neighbourhood of Hazil we met with a party of the Sulaib, the great news-carriers of the desert, from whom we learnt that the whole of the Anaiza tribe, with the exception of one section, were moving south to attack Ibn er Rashid. Three months previously the Roalla section of the Anaiza, who camp in the districts round Jauf, had attacked that town and taken it, killing Ibn er Rashid's governor. Ibn Sheilan, the sheikh of the Roalla, appointed his son governor in his stead, and proceeded to levy taxes on the inhabitants. The Anaiza hoped now to follow up this success by taking Hail itself, assisted by the Amir of Riadh, Ibn Sa'ud, who was said to be moving up from the south. On February 12, soon after dawn, we caught sight of the Anaiza moving parallel to our march, but unfortunately the Roalla, who knew nothing

about the above-mentioned arrangement between the Shammar and the Amarat, were marching on the flank nearest us. Their horsemen soon swept down and by nightfall had seized the whole of the belongings, tents, camels, etc., of the Shammar after a running fight of several miles. My own small party of three managed to get away, and, making a circuit to avoid the Roalla, succeeded in reaching the Amarat, whose sheikh, Fahed Bey, received me most kindly. He himself had only heard of the mishap to the Shammar when the fight was over, but he immediately took steps to restore the stock and property and succeeded in doing so as regards a part of it."

Leachman dismissed his escape from the Roalla horsemen, whose devastating attack came with bewildering suddenness, with a few words. It is very remarkable how he invariably kept silent on any danger he ran and never gave the least indication of how he avoided it ; but his behaviour on this and on other occasions cannot pass without comment, for it gives an insight into his cool and calculated daring and the rapidity with which his mind worked and his decisions were made.

The attack, as we have said, was a vicious one and delivered with bewildering suddenness, indeed, the wild shouts of the charging Roalla, the muffled thunder of their horses' hoofs, and the volume of fire which these redoubtable horsemen delivered from their saddles, paralysed the wretched following of Majid into impotence. As is usually the case with Bedouin Arabs, the firing was wild in the extreme, but several bullets by chance found a billet in men, horses and camels. The din was appalling. Instantly Leachman's keen eye summed up the

situation and a split second was sufficient for him to determine his course of action. He could not afford to get seriously involved in the fray; to lose his life would have been a stupid sacrifice, to get wounded or captured, the end of all his plans. He was at the head of the column, riding with Majid, when the attack was delivered, his two companions, Khidr and Zawa, some distance away. He saw instantly that the Roalla cavalry would swamp his friends, so he detached himself and, moving rapidly on the side of the column away from the enemy, called loudly for Khidr and Zawa, who at once joined him. Without undue haste they moved away from the scene of the conflict and when at a sufficient distance rapidly circled the enemy until a deep depression hid them from view. Here they hastily consulted together and decided to seek out the Anaiza, who were by now not to be seen, and claim the protection of Fahed Bey, with the result Leachman describes. They safely reached the Amarat camp where they were hospitably received by Salar, sheikh of the Fad'an section, but with the loss of one of Leachman's camels, all his store of rice and flour, his cooking-pot, and a rifle and ammunition. Leachman discovered that the Anaiza were making for an attack on Ibn er Rashid.

The next day Leachman was quite at home with his new friends and an interesting lot he found them to be. There was a Sha'lan sheikh of the Roalla, "a fine-looking ruffian," who told him that the previous year he had entertained an Austrian traveller. This was Professor Alois Musil, called by the Arabs "Musa Al Namsawi" whose monumental work on North Arabia has only recently been published in six volumes by the American Geographical Society, and who was doing for the Turks and Germans what Leachman was doing for

his own country. Musil was no soldier, but he was an expert intelligence agent and his splendid work was spread over more than twenty years of indefatigable labour. Leachman, on the other hand, was a blunt soldier and his labours had only just begun ; later it will be interesting to compare the results obtained in the acid test of war when each side vied with the other to gain control, or to influence in their favour the great confederacy of Arab tribes. Fahed Bey, or Ibn Abdul Mushin Ibn Hadhahal, to give him his full title, was the recipient of great attention from the Turks, who tried by every persuasive means and blandishment to reconcile him to their ally, Ibn er Rashid, in the same manner as they had attempted to do with the latter's great rival, Ibn Sa'ud. Fahed Bey was astute enough not to commit himself too deeply, but at the same time he was cautious enough not to offend them openly ; consequently, his reception of Leachman was extremely tepid, a fact which Leachman remembered for seven years, when he evened the score.

As Fahed Bey plays an important part in Leachman's later history, a brief description of this famous chieftain will not perhaps come amiss. He was, Leachman tells us, an oldish man, nearly blind, though if this was so at this time his eyes must have improved later on, or possibly he was then afflicted with a cataract, since some years later his sight did not appear to trouble him. He was heavy and ponderous on his feet but, for so solid a man, astonishingly expert on a horse. His voice was deep and quiet and his booming sentences were slowly delivered. In spite of his stoutness his face was mobile when he was interested or moved, and his smile broad, even caressing ; but, when he desired to show displeasure, his features seemed to sink into the lifelessness of clay. Like all Arab

aristocrats, his courtesy was princely and his hospitality had a special and indefinable quality. In every sense of the word he was a ruler ; within the limitations of his harsh, unstable kingdom his authority was unquestioned and the love his men bore him profound. Leachman first met him in his huge tent, which did not have the usual partition for women, who were relegated to a separate one. Surrounded by a crowd of the looted Shammar, including Majid, clamouring to have their property restored —“ the attack had been an injustice. They had come into Anaiza territory to deliver to Fahed Bey his horses, therefore they were his guests ”— Fahed Bey was not in good humour.

His nephew was far more friendly than his uncle, and another chief, Fahed Ibn Dughaiyim, Leachman admired greatly as being a true Bedouin, for he preferred the rough and genuine article to the one smoothed by a too frequent contact with the town.

From Lughatan the Anaiza continued their march and on the second day, February 14, the camp of Ma'dan was attacked and looted, but the Anaiza lost two men killed in the process and then restored the booty taken, so, as Leachman remarks, not much seemed gained. It is a pity he has not told us the reason for the restoration of the loot on this occasion, for the codes which govern desert warfare are strange and interesting. The desperate fight for existence in that harsh land during the passing centuries has imposed a limit on men's actions and placed restrictions on too harsh treatment—in circumstances almost identical, a man will be treated as an honoured guest and his property remain inviolate or he may, with apparently equal justice, lose his life and goods.

It must have been an imposing sight to see this flood of Arab warriors flowing slowly and majestically

forward. As he gazed in wonder at the vast array it must have seemed to Leachman that no force in the desert could stem so fierce and powerful a stream, yet in a few days it was scattered like fallen leaves before a gale—but we must leave it to Leachman himself to tell of that amazing reverse.

“The Anaiza, by far the largest tribe in Arabia, were at this time in exceptional strength. The sheikhs repeatedly told me that they could not remember a previous occasion on which the Anaiza had marched on a *ghrazzu*, or foray, in such numbers. Looking from an eminence, the desert as far as the eye could see was a moving mass of Arabs, each section moving on its own line. As a rule the mounted men marched in front, behind them coming the *thelul* (dromedary) riders, while in the middle of them, on a picked *thelul*, was the *mirkab* of the Roalla. This consists of a frame covered with black ostrich feathers, in which a maiden from the sheikh's family rides in battle, exhorting the combatants to deeds of valour. In former times the *mirkab* was a familiar sight in Bedouin warfare, but now the Roalla are the only Bedouin in possession of one. Three days after the fight with the Shammar, the great pilgrim road known as the Darb ez Zobeide was reached at Jumeima. This road, which runs from Meshed Ali via Jebel Shammar to Medina, is the route which at all times has been used by the pilgrims from Persia and Baghdad.

“Both the Blunts and Huber marched by it from Hail to Meshed Ali. The road of Zobeide takes its name from the favourite wife of the Caliph, Haroun al Rashid, who caused reservoirs known as *birkets* and rest-houses to be con-

structed at intervals along the road for the convenience of pilgrims. These have suffered considerably at different times from invading powers, and especially at the hands of the Wahabis, and now one *birket* alone remains in good condition, and this is at Jumeima. It is constructed in a depression, the water draining into it from all sides, and is made of cemented stone ; it is ninety feet square with a depth of twenty feet, with steps leading down to the water, and troughs round for the watering of animals. When the Anaiza reached this *birket* they had been thirsting for several days, and it was feared that the supply would not suffice were the whole camp allowed to drink their fill. Orders were given that no baggage camels were to be watered but men and *theluls* only. In many instances these orders were disregarded, and large numbers of thirsty baggage camels were driven down to the water. Exemplary treatment was meted out to the offenders, the sheikh's sons and servants riding out and firing into the mass and using their swords freely, whereupon the owners were as eager to get their camels away undamaged as they were to water them.

"At Jumeima news arrived that Ibn er Rashid was two days' distant in the direction of Hail, and the Anaiza therefore formed their camp in compact lines instead of in the usual straggling Bedouin fashion. In the depression in which the *birket* of Jumeima is situated I counted roughly 3,500 tents, which was only a small portion of the whole. Daily there arrived contingents of Arabs from the tribes of the Euphrates valley, who had been brought to join this movement in the hope of loot, an irresistible

attraction with the Arab. These tribesmen are not true Bedouin, but are infinitely better armed, most of them carrying a good type of Martini carbine; they invariably knock the sights off, having no use for them. They are of great fighting value from the fact that, being unmounted, they cannot easily run away, which the Bedouin is in the habit of doing as soon as things appear to be going against him. These Arabs are of the Ma'dan tribe, and are distinguished from Bedouin in that they own sheep and donkeys and cultivate in the season a certain amount of land on the banks of the river. The arrival of parties of Ma'dan were usually heralded by heavy firing, and each party would dance into the camp, and leap about in front of the sheikh's tents, chanting the battle cry and discharging their rifles into the air, quite regardless of where the bullets fell. This proved the undoing of the Anaiza, for, a few days after their arrival at Jumeima, heavy firing was heard in the distance, and was put down to the arrival of new reinforcements, which were expected. It was, however, Ibn er Rashid with his force, mounted on *theluls*, each with a *redif*, or man riding behind the driver. . . . He had made a forced march and completely surprised the camp. The Anaiza had but time to drive in their camels, and without much fight poured out the opposite side of the camp, followed by masses of women and children on foot, as Ibn er Rashid came in on the other side. The latter swept through the camp but did not pursue the Anaiza, it by this time being almost dark. Early the next morning the camp was looted, and after a short time only the dead animals showed where this huge force had had



THE ANAIZA RUSHING TO DEFEND THEIR CAMP,
WHICH, HOWEVER, THEY ABANDONED IN PANIC

[See Page 155]



MADAN ARABS MARCHING IN TO JOIN THE ANAIZA

(This Photograph and the one above were taken by Leachman)

their tents. As an instance of the good feeling with which the Arab fighting is carried out, Ibn er Rashid allowed none to touch the tents of the two chief sheikhs of the Anaiza, and after the battle the leader of Ibn er Rashid's fighting men sent a letter to the Anaiza sheikh, regretting that he had not had an opportunity of paying his respects to him. The losses, as is usually the case in Arab fighting, were not heavy on either side; among them was a Shammar youth, who, on hearing that his uncle had been killed, shot himself. I was much struck by the fact that several Anaiza women, in passing me in their flight from the camp, thrust upon me their silver ornaments for safe keeping, rather than entrust them to their own countrymen.

"On this occasion a Shammar who chanced to be in the Anaiza camp protected me and my *theluls* and I returned with the *ghrazzu* to Ibn er Rashid's camp, which was at ez Zobala, also on the Darb ez Zobeide."

Well might Leachman be astonished at the incident of the women handing him their ornaments. His simple mind and unassuming modesty prevented him from realizing the true importance of an action which later on was spoken of with wonder throughout the country. His diary adds some important details to the story, but a few quietly spoken words by Leachman himself, sitting, some years later, under the palm trees of Shithatha, has added to our knowledge of what transpired. With his chin resting on his bony knees, and his eyes looking dreamily to the south over the empty rolling plains of the desert, which stretched away before him, and over which he had passed on that memorable journey, he re-lived the scene, and the memory of

those feverish, perilous moments, in which he remained a hostage in the hands of fate, was re-awakened.

At the moment when the alarm was given Leachman was seated in Fahed Bey's great tent; the coffee server was handing round his cups of black liquid; Fahed Bey himself was reclining against a camel saddle, his curved sword across his knees, and his guests were seated in a circle around him while one recounted a tale of desert warfare. Suddenly the noise of distant firing was heard and the story-teller paused while all listened, when, as Leachman tells us, it was thought to be the arrival of a party of Ma'dan and the story-teller renewed his tale, only to be interrupted by a Bedouin who burst uncereemoniously into the tent and spoke so excitedly that no one could understand, though he kept emphasizing his stream of words by pointing through the tent door to the south. All rose in confusion, snatching up their weapons and streaming out into the open. Leachman stood at the tent entrance, looking in the direction in which the terrified messenger had pointed. A vast cloud of dust rose on the horizon. Between this fog of flying sand and the camp the plain was sprinkled with odd groups of mounted Anaiza frantically urging their beasts forward and driving in camels, which had been out grazing, with shrill shouts. Raising his glasses, Leachman saw dense masses of men advancing at speed, their hostile intent advertised by the crack of rifle fire and the whine of bullets. In the camp itself the utmost uproar and confusion prevailed. His own two servants came swiftly to his side and urged him to flee as his life would not be worth a moment's purchase; he refused and ordered them to load his own camels and their own as quickly as possible and take them to Majid. His own camels were among

the last to come in. The three of them loaded them in frantic haste and Leachman dismissed them swiftly to Majid's tent. He himself returned to Fahed Bey's tent and stood there quietly watching the extraordinary scene, a calm silent figure in the midst of a rushing torrent of humanity. It seemed at first as if the enemy must burst into the middle of the panic-stricken Anaiza. Women and children in indescribable confusion seized indiscriminately the goods nearest their hands and flung them on to each camel as it reached the camp ; their shrill cries were mingled with the shouts of the rapidly approaching enemy, and a shower of bullets added a fearsome accompaniment to this wild medley of sound. As each one's task was performed he or she fled from the camp.

All the time Leachman stood watching, noting all that passed. First he glanced toward the oncoming Shammar and then to the fleeing Anaiza, measuring the distance between the two and wondering who would win the mad race, the Anaiza to escape or the Shammar to get amongst their hereditary enemies. He told us that " it seemed to be odds on the Shammar but I misjudged the speed at which the Anaiza could bolt." Even in the peril of the moment his humour could not be suppressed and he soon seized the occasion to take a series of photographs, some of which are reproduced here. But already his mind was made up. A few days previously he had fled from a somewhat similar scene, but on this occasion he remained behind amidst the hail of bullets, calmly awaiting the arrival of this mob of shouting, excited Bedouin. He ran an appalling risk not only from a stray bullet but from the oncoming host, frenzied from the pursuit and the prospect of loot, but he knew that Ibn er Rashid was leading the attack and he regarded it as a fortuitous

circumstance that would possibly enable him to meet him and obtain his permission to go to Hail. When asked whether he did not appreciate the risk he ran, "Well," he said apologetically, "If I had left with the Anaiza, all prospects of my getting to Hail would have gone."

In the midst of that seething turmoil, unaffected by the universal panic, Leachman alone remained silent and composed, and made no preparations for escape. As they passed the women saw in this calm figure a means of saving their most precious possessions. They pressed into his unwilling hands their poor jewellery, a wonderful tribute to his integrity when he had been with them only a few days, and to his calmness and courage which inspired them with confidence that he would escape from harm and save them their simple, but valued trinkets.

The Anaiza were hardly clear of the camp when the Shammar burst upon it like a tornado. With the cavalry leading and the camel-men following they swept through the camp, cutting down the tents in their passage, and continued the pursuit. In the midst of this crashing sea of riders Leachman sat alone in Fahed's tent. When, tired of pursuit and impatient for the plunder awaiting them, the Shammar returned, there took place an appalling orgy of looting, in which Majid and his men joined. The excited men burst into Fahed's tent where, to their amazement, they found Leachman calmly writing his notes. Their astonishment brought their impetuosity to a halt and for a moment they stood motionless. That moment delivered Leachman from harm, for it gave him time to tell them to stand away from the doorway so that he could see to write. This he did in so commanding a voice that these men, who normally would have struck down anyone who opposed their greed, automatically

obeyed. At this instant his courage received the reward it merited, for a Shammar youth, one of Majid's party, whom chance brought there, explained who he was and in such approving terms that all danger passed.

The next day when the Shammar returned from their raid, Leachman accompanied them. Of the Anaiza camp of over a thousand tents no vestige remained.

CHAPTER XII

FIRST ARABIAN EXPLORATION. PART II

THE great concourse of rejoicing Shammar, of whom hardly one returned profitless, moved back along the broad track of Darb Zobeide to the cistern of Zabala, twelve miles distant, where Ibn er Rashid himself had his camp.

The whole night Leachman spent dressing the wounds of the warriors. Just as in South Africa he would not take his own well-earned rest until he had attended to the hurts and needs of his horses and ponies, so now his compassion made him labour unceasingly in his work of mercy. By the dim light of two hurricane lanterns he dealt, with such skill as his limited surgical knowledge permitted, with a variety of bullet wounds and sword cuts ; he actually sewed up a man's shoulder which had been laid open with the slash of a sword, and put two fractured arms in simple splints.

All around him twinkled the thousand camp-fires of the Bedouin host, its recent passion stilled for the moment yet ready to blaze out at the slightest provocation. All were indifferent to the work he was performing, save that long line of patiently waiting men nursing their hurts till the stranger could ease them.

The next day, February 18, he went to pay his respects to the chief of all the Shammar. His camp was composed mostly of the white tents of the men of Hail. Leachman was received by his hereditary standard-bearer, Abdul Ibn Mubarak Ibn Feraik, a



SHAMMAR ARABS WITH THEIR LOOT AFTER RAIDING THE ANAIZA CAMP
(*Photograph by Leachman*)

gorgeous person in a gold *aba*, who entertained him with coffee until the prince was ready to receive him. After a short delay he was conducted to the great audience tent.

Leachman has left a brief account of his further adventure in the *Geographical Journal*, of which the following is an extract :

“ The present Emir of Hail is Sa’ud Ibn er Rashid, a boy of twelve, son of Abdul Aziz, who was killed in battle in 1906, his eldest son Mitaab succeeded him ; in 1907 he met an untimely end at the hands of his cousin, Sultan Ibn Hamud er Rashid, who put to death at the same time the remainder of the family with the exception of the present Emir, who was taken to Medina. Sultan Ibn Hamud was himself shortly after murdered by his own brother, Sa’ud Ibn Hamud, and he, in his turn, was murdered by his uncle, who then brought the present Emir, Sa’ud, from Medina. This last event took place in the winter of 1908-1909. On arrival in the Shammar camp I was called to the Emir, who was sitting in audience in a great tent with the regent, Zamil Ibn Sabhan, by his side. Sa’ud is a handsome little boy with beautiful features and very fair. He is a fine horseman, riding being in fact his only amusement, and being but a child he becomes very weary of the long sittings in the *maglis*, where tribal affairs are discussed at an inordinate length. He exhibits at times a most violent temper, which, with his features and other characteristics, he seems to have inherited from his father, Abdul Aziz. Zamil Ibn Sabhan, the regent, is a man of thirty-four, but, in spite of his youth, is probably a stronger man than the Ibn er Rashid Emirate have seen

for many years. He is largely responsible for a very great change that is taking place in the position and character of this Central Arabian power.

"At the present day tobacco is practically used everywhere, and privileged persons smoke even in the *diwan* of the Emir, and on one occasion Zamil himself smoked a cigarette in my presence in his private tent. He also once played a Turkish game of cards with me. In their dress also they no longer affect the simplicity dictated by the Wahabi, but wear clothes richly embroidered with gold and interwoven with silk.

"The relations of the Emirate of Hail with surrounding powers have also undergone a change. The old disregard for the Ottoman power has given place to professed sentiments of cordiality, and communication is kept up constantly with the Porte; in speaking of the Porte, Zamil always named it *doulatana*, our government. As is always the case in Arabia, the relations of Ibn er Rashid with the great Bedouin stocks are constantly changing, but at present the Ataiha, the tribe between Hail and Mecca, appear to be friendly, as are portions of the Beni Harb between Hail and Medina, and also a section of the Umteir in the direction of Kuwait. Mubarak Ibn Sabah of Kuwait professes a friendship which cannot be very great, considering that at present he and Ibn Saud of Riadh, the perpetual enemy of Hail, are comrades in arms. Sa'dun Pasha, sheikh of the Muntafik, and also the Bedouin tribe, the Dhafir, both from the East, are friendly to Hail.

"Notwithstanding a conciliatory attitude

towards the surrounding tribes, the Emir does not hesitate to deal in a summary manner with refractory sheikhs. In his recent struggle with the Anaiza, the chief sheikh of the Beni Harb, who, in Zamil's opinion, should have supported him, waited until he saw that the Shammar had gained the upper hand, and then came into the Shammar camp to offer his congratulations. Zamil immediately put him into horse-shackles and confined him in the tents of the slaves, threatening to execute him if a certain ransom was not received ; this threat would undoubtedly have been carried out had not the ransom—200 *theluls* and 25 cast Arab mares—been forthcoming. And this man was the great sheikh of one of the most formidable tribes in Arabia.

“ While in the field discipline and general arrangements are of a comparatively high order. In the early morning a crier announces a move of the camp, and the standard-bearer unfurls the flag, and when the latter mounts his *thelul*, the whole force moves off headed by the three purple standards of Hail, one for the Emir and one for each of the quarters of the town. In camp the tents, which are of white canvas and not of black hair like those of the Bedouin, are always pitched in the same formation. Scouts are out constantly in search of enemy, water or grazing. An armourer with a fair knowledge of his work is kept busy doing repairs to the extraordinary variety of arms, for which he is paid by the Emir. In battle the Bedouin thinks little of the fighting and much of the loot, but the Shammar are kept in hand till the enemy are beaten, and then only are they allowed to loot. Prisoners taken are

beheaded, though sheikhs are often spared. Hospitality on the *ghrazzu* is most lavish. On arrival, a guest is received by a magnificent personage in a gold coat, Abdul Ibn Feraik, hereditary standard-bearer to the Ibn er Rashids. His is a powerful though dangerous position, as he must always be in the forefront of the battle. Abdul, a man of thirty-five, has no less than ten bullet wounds in his body. The guest is then led to a special tent and regaled with coffee until the Emir receives him in the public *diwan*. If a man of position he is given a private tent, and provided with everything he desires, and even eats from the Emir's dish. Other guests are fed in a special tent, their number seldom being below sixty or seventy. Amusements in camp are few, mimic warfare being the chief one. This is always led by the Emir in person, who gallops among the tents, lance in hand, followed by his band of horsemen. At night the conversation in the *diwans* is of a most enlightened character, chiefly consisting of battle stories or family history, while a poet usually recites or intones a *kasid*, or poem. These poets are men who wander from tribe to tribe composing *kasids* in honour of the sheikhs and receiving gifts in exchange; this is nothing more or less than a form of blackmail, as, if not well treated by a sheikh, they compose poems ridiculing him in other camps.

"The Hail folk are most strict in their observance of prayer. *Muezzins* call at the usual hours in different parts of the camp, when all form up in various places, when absentees are noticed and often beaten. In spite of the fact that they are strict Moslems, they are not fanatical, being in this respect quite the reverse

of the bigoted riverain Arabs of Iak. In the course of a stay of five weeks with the Emir, I hardly heard one offensive remark about Christians, and in the *maglis*, if at any time one asked me questions concerning religion, he was invariably silenced by the sheikhs, and Zamil, the regent, himself, when repeating for my benefit, as he often did, extracts from the holy books, always asked first if I had any objection. The *mullahs*, of whom there were a large number with the *ghrazzu*, had no hesitation in coming to my tent and drinking coffee or eating food with me, and when I left the Emir, many of them came to bid me good-bye. They were fond of impressing upon me the fact that though they would eat food with me, they would not do so with a Shia.

“ During this time the *ghrazzu* moved by short marches about the district known as the Hejera.

“ In the middle of March the *ghrazzu* left the Hejera, and camped at the famous wells of Leina, lying in the valley between the Nefud and the Hejera. The wells at this place number some hundreds, spread over an area of five or six miles. They are bored in hard white stone, and as many of them, though of a depth of twenty to thirty feet, have a diameter of only two feet, it is difficult to understand how they were originally excavated. In the neighbourhood are the ruins of many stone houses. Leina is on the road known as the Darb es Selman, the most easterly of the three routes from Hail to Meshed Ali. There we met the *Haj*, or pilgrim caravan, returning from Medina to Meshed Ali (Najaf). Owing to the unsettled state of the country pilgrims had not been able to use this road for six years, preferring the longer route

by Damascus, or else travelling by sea from Baghdad. As the *Haj* is a source of considerable profit to Ibn er Rashid, as well as to the townsfolk of Hail, he was endeavouring to popularize this route by allowing pilgrims to travel through his country at a minimum of cost. In former times it was the habit of the rulers of Hail, when once they got the pilgrims in their clutches, to delay them until they had extracted the last coin from them. This year, however, Ibn er Rashid had only taken 2½ liras (about 45 shillings) from each member, and besides this, the hire of a camel from Medina to Meshed Ali (Najaf) is about 17 reals (about 51 shillings), so the cost compares well with passage by sea, or by road by way of Syria. The majority of this *Haj* are Persians, for whom the Arab has the most supreme contempt, as one who cuts but a sorry figure upon a camel.

"I had repeatedly begged Zamil to send me to Hail, distant about three days, but he put me off with the excuse that the road was not at present safe. He probably never had any intention of allowing me to go, and finally sent for me early one morning, and bade me leave at once with a caravan for the neighbourhood of Zobeir, near Basra. He pointed out that both my life and goods were in his hands, and that he would be quite within his rights in taking either or both. Judging from the experiences of the most recent travellers in these parts, I wonder that he took nothing from me; indeed, the sheikhs used to send daily for various possessions of mine, but they were at all times most careful to return them; hints were, of course, thrown out that certain things would be acceptable. After most friendly farewells, I left the *ghrazzu* and travelled

with a party of Shammar going down to Al Khamisiya, between Zobeir and Suk esh Sheyuk, on the Euphrates, to buy food. Travelling very fast, we left the Nefud, passed across the Hejera, and entering the *dirat* of the Dhafir Bedouin traversed a featureless, gravelly country to the camp of Sa'dun Pasha, sheikh of the Muntafik, a large and powerful tribe inhabiting the southern part of the Jazira in Irak. He was in a war camp awaiting the attack of Mubarak Ibn Sabah of Kuweit, and Ibn Sa'ud, Emir of Riadh. These had attacked him a few days previous to our arrival, and had been beaten off with heavy losses, heavy at least for Arab warfare, as I counted nearly a hundred bodies on the battle-field itself, and many must have died afterwards. It was reported that Mubarak and Ibn Sa'ud were advancing again, and there were incessant alarms when there was an immediate sortie of warriors in the direction of the expected attack. During my stay with Sa'dun Pasha I witnessed an occurrence which I have not seen mentioned before by travellers. In a previous fight between the Dhafir and the Anaiza, a man of the Dhafir was captured, and in the ordinary sequence of events would have been killed. The sheikh of the Dhafir, however, had made a last attack and rescued the man; the latter waited until Dhafir reached the camp of Sa'dun, and one night rode slowly through the tents mounted on a *thelul*, singing two lines of a *kasid* describing his rescue, and of which the refrain ran, "I whiten the face of Ibn Suwait" (sheikh of Dhafir and his rescuer). The Arabs say this form of recognition of a valiant action, though well known by tradition among them, is rarely seen.

"After being most hospitably entertained by Sa'dun, I marched to the Euphrates in the neighbourhood of Samawa, whence I passed through the Shia Arabs of the riverain plain to Baghdad, experiencing a certain amount of the boorish treatment for which these sectarians are notorious.

"During my journey I encountered at all times, a number of that curious people, the Sulaib, about which so little seems to be known. It is a curious fact that the Arabs appear to be as interested in their origin and characteristics and as ignorant concerning them as Europeans. I have heard Arabs inquiring from Sulaib as to their religion, asking if they are Christians and receiving a not very indignant denial. They are usually met with in small parties of half a dozen men with women and children. They avoid as much as possible known watering-places, and have therefore become famous among Arabs for their knowledge of the country. They usually have donkeys only, but some have camels. They dress in one long smocklike garment made out of gazelle skins with a hood, and when hunting, in which they are most extraordinarily expert, they usually cover up their heads with this hood, and it is said can approach within a few yards of a herd of gazelle without alarming them. Arabs speak of the comparative luxury in which these people live as regards food, and say that they always have flesh to eat and *lebn* (sour milk) to drink. They appear to wander over a very extensive area, and the only Arabs I have met who do not know of Sulaib in their *dirat* are the Kahtan from south-west Arabia."

In the account which he wrote for the *Geographical*

Journal, Leachman gave a picturesque description of Ibn er Rashid and his following, but it will be noted once more how impersonal the narrative is; even his diary, in spite of its reticence, contains only a few interesting little sidelights on his experiences. He was always very cautious what he wrote, even in that private record. The possibility of its being stolen and read by unauthorized persons was ever present in his mind. Moreover, the perpetual need for secrecy and of having to be on his guard became ingrained in him, so that he became more and more silent regarding his actions as time went on. In the present instance we have no other sources to draw upon to fill in the gaps between these two records, and we have to let fancy fill in the lights and shades of the picture of his daily life among the wild folk of the desert. The diary must not be neglected, so an attempt will be made to give the story in concentrated form.

After his introduction to Ibn er Rashid, Leachman was asked to dine with him and sat on the ground with others round a huge platter of rice, meat and vegetables. Regal as the fare was, Leachman was but half satisfied as it was his first meal of the day.

The next day he got rid of his "Aqaili" attendants as he found them to be utterly useless. So he was left alone in the Shammar camp for five weeks, until March 25.

During the first few days of his stay rain fell in abundance and, in the amazing manner of the desert, herbs and grass sprang to fresh green life so that the camels and other beasts grew fat and round-bellied.

The Shammar then moved slowly south, taking full advantage of this luxurious plenty to reap the full benefit of fresh grazing grounds. They presented a magnificent spectacle, sometimes winding through narrow valleys now bright with flowers and verdure,

which compressed the host into a compact and seemingly unending column, at others debouching on to the plain. The column then would widen out so that the whole expanse appeared covered with countless detachments.

The particular flag of each column was displayed proudly at its head and at the head of all rode the war-scarred Abdul. Leachman attached himself to this gorgeous person, whom he found to be a good sort but a great sponger, who left on February 20 for Hail, leaving Leachman a pound the poorer, but richer for a kiss of peace at parting.

Messengers were sent post haste to Baghdad, Kuwait, and Zubeir, to advertise the glorious victory over the Anaiza, and embassies from various tribes came in to offer congratulations. The messengers also told of Leachman's "capture," whereat the Turks rejoiced greatly and hoped bitter things for him.

There is little doubt that instructions were sent by them to their ally to prevent him getting to Hail. But Leachman was, of course, ignorant of this and chafed and fumed impotently against this setback to his plans. He was the more enraged when he considered the risks he had taken to achieve his object.

At times he felt unwell, his stomach revolting at the fare with which he was provided, and he considered the food of the prince so filthy that a couple of ostrich eggs made into a kind of omelette came as a welcome relief. Zamil, the regent, was as obstinate as a mule with regard to giving way to Leachman's daily repeated request to go to Hail, but was more generous-minded with regard to his guest's content in other matters, and suggested he that should take a girl of the Shammar as a wife, he himself having done this to make the slowly passing days less boring.

Almost every day brought a fresh rumour. "Ibn Sa'ud had reached Kuweit to assist Mubarak against Sa'dun Pasha of the Muntafik." "The Sherif of Mecca was marching with eight hundred men to seize the province of Qasim from Ibn Sa'ud," and so on; rumour following rumour until it became impossible to judge truth from falsehood, and Leachman became exasperated with this flood of tales and jots down an angry protest in his diary. "There is no place or people in the world for hatching fabulous stories like the Arabs; one cannot believe a word of anything one hears."

These phantasies were borne by the numerous visitors to the camp from all parts of Arabia. Among these came the son of Fahed Bey to treat for peace, and this causes Leachman to scribble down a contemptuous comment: "Considering that his party, and probably himself, had run away in a disgraceful manner a week before, I thought he gave himself airs."

The reputation he had earned for himself on his first night as a doctor caused Leachman's services to be perpetually called upon for the cure of all sorts of ailments, and he appears to have had a very large amount of medical stores with him, for he was constantly busy administering to the needs of the ailing. It is surprising that his medicines lasted as long as they did, for the Arabs appeared to think that "quantity" appeared to offer the best hope of a cure. An Ataiba sheikh, complaining of constipation, carried off and nearly consumed at a draught a whole bottle of castor oil, but, finding that he would probably require no more for years, in very shame at his greed returned the little that was left.

Leachman continued to be on the most friendly terms with the regent, with whom he had long and interesting discussions on all manner of subjects.

Each day added to his store of knowledge. His meetings with every class of Arab, from the prince to the humble Bedouin, gave him an insight into Arab character which nothing short of this actual experience would have provided, but the passing days rewarded him ill for the forced inaction he was condemned to suffer and his irritation is apparent in his diary when he describes his servant Khidr as "a loathsome swine and a liar." His troubles seemed to reach their climax when, being obliged to keep to his tent a whole day, he was nearly overpowered by a terrible stench which every hour became more and more unbearable. It turned out to be a dead camel lying within a few feet of him, which the Bedouin, inured to odours of this kind, were too lazy to remove. He appealed urgently to the regent, who, instead of mending matters, delivered a hint not to be mistaken. He suggested that Leachman's circumstances would soon become more agreeable owing to the fact that he would be able to continue his journey in the near future. As Leachman had virtually been a prisoner for over a month, and that undoubtedly at the instigation of the Turks, whose press later showed their true hopes, namely, that he should be imprisoned in Hail, the news, although disappointing in one sense, was agreeable in another, and meant that Ibn er Rashid had at last agreed to let his captive go. This happy event was brought about by Leachman's own personality, and there is no question that had he shown any signs of weakness, or fear, his danger would have been extreme; not only did he display neither, but on the contrary, his courageous, manly bearing won him at once the affection and esteem not only of the leaders but of the rough and truculent clansmen and even of the *mullahs*.

Two incidents which show the honesty of his nature

and his obstinate courage stand out above all others.

The first was when he openly declared himself to be a Christian, in strong contrast to certain other Arabian explorers who sought to ease their condition by a denial of their faith. Leachman, on the contrary, although, as he states, a captive among some of the most fanatical members of Islam, not only boldly proclaimed his religion but argued points of theology with the regent and a certain old and blind religious teacher, who urged him to embrace the Mohammedan religion. Leachman wrote whimsically that he did not find himself very well up in the subject, but held his own in the argument. It is astonishing to think that the *mullahs* themselves, notorious for their fanaticism, not only honoured him for his courage in upholding his faith but took him to their hearts and did not think it beneath their dignity to demonstrate their affection for him by bidding him farewell. As in all things which lay closest to his heart, he never talked of religion, but if courage, honour, loyalty, and an abounding charity are attributes of the Christian faith, then there never was a more noble Christian than this unassuming young soldier.

The second occasion was when a present to the regent would have fulfilled his ardent wish to get to Hail. Although it meant the failure of his plans and bitter disappointment, Leachman dismissed the suggestion with scorn, refusing to attain his object by a method thoroughly repugnant to him.

On March 25, Zamil, the regent, disclosed his hand: "Do you want to travel in our countries?" he asked. "Now Blunt, Nolde, and Huber all came with fine presents and a big retinue and with the authority of the Turks. You have come with none of these. Your life is at our mercy according to the law of Nejdi. Our religions are different and we love

our Government (Turkey). You can depart when you like."

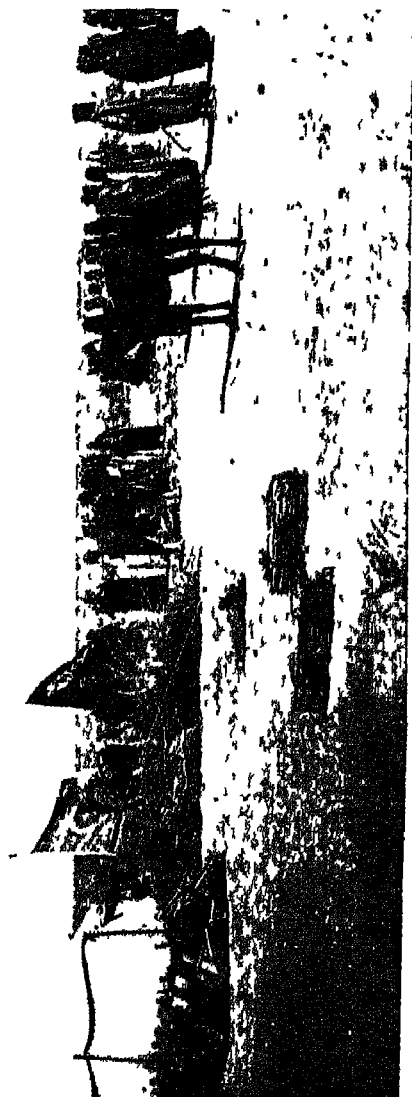
This time the language of Zamil was crystal clear, and that same day Leachman left the Shammar camp with a trading caravan of some fifty camels going down to the desert port of Khamisiya. Zamil saw that he was provided with food for the journey and even sent him a message at the last moment that a suitable present, or even money, might yet work a miracle. "But," wrote Leachman in his diary, "I struck at that and said I only wanted to go to Kuwait. I then bade adieu with pleasure to Zamil and the *shuyukh* (sheikhs) and to the little Emir and had a most affectionate parting with Abdul the *Bairugdar*. (standard-bearer), and many others who came to say good-bye."

Where every circumstance combined to make his position most difficult, when his obstinacy might well have provoked feelings of resentment with Zamil and others, his personality triumphed over ill-feeling and he departed with the esteem and good wishes of all.

A heavy thunderstorm signalled his departure, and that night he was five miles away from the camp which had held his hopes and disappointments.

The leaders of the caravan, anxious to avoid the manifold dangers lurking in this chaotic and lawless district, travelled at an astonishing speed. In four days a hundred and forty-four miles were covered to the wells of Ghuribiya, in close proximity to the scene of the recent fighting between Sa'dun Pasha and Ibn Sa'ud. The fight had taken place twelve days previously, but the ground was still strewn with many naked corpses, mostly purple, some dry and many eaten by wolves and vultures.

As usual Leachman was honourably treated, and dined with Khadam Ibn Faid, the leader of the caravan, whom he found to be a delightful gentleman



SA'DUN PASHA'S TENT WITH THE MUNTAFIK ARABS
[See Page 175]
(*Photograph taken by Leachman*)

with manners such as he had never seen. He also met another useful personage, Muhammad Ibn Dawish, sheikh of the Mutair, who would later gain renown as one of the leaders of the Wahabi revival movement, and who assured Leachman that, for a suitable recompense, he could conduct him whithersoever he might wish to go. On March 31 Leachman and Khadam left the caravan, on instructions received from Zamil, to seek the camp of Sa'dun Pasha which they found, after they had travelled twenty miles, just settling down after the day's march. The great man was asleep when they arrived, so that Leachman had to wait for his interview. Then he was impressed both by the simplicity of the man himself and his quarters, which reflected his own unaffected nature. A large reception tent, a smaller one for himself, and a kitchen, were sufficient for all Sa'dun's needs, but his hospitality was lavish and his industry great. The whole time he was busy receiving and reading messages from all quarters, and at dinner he presided and remained until all had finished, whether they were guests or menials, thus honouring both impartially. This hospitable behaviour was very different to that which Leachman had recently experienced in the district of Nejd, where custom enjoined that each man should rise when he had finished to give place to another.

Leachman described Sa'dun as a most delightful man, with whom he felt more at ease than with any of his experiences. Indeed he seemed quite unlike an Arab. He spoke unaffectedly, in clear Arabic, of his recent victory and that in spite of the fact that his opposite number in the battle, Mubarak Ibn Sabah, had complained bitterly to the British authorities, and the latter to the Turks, that he had been attacked quite unprovokedly while on a shooting expedition.

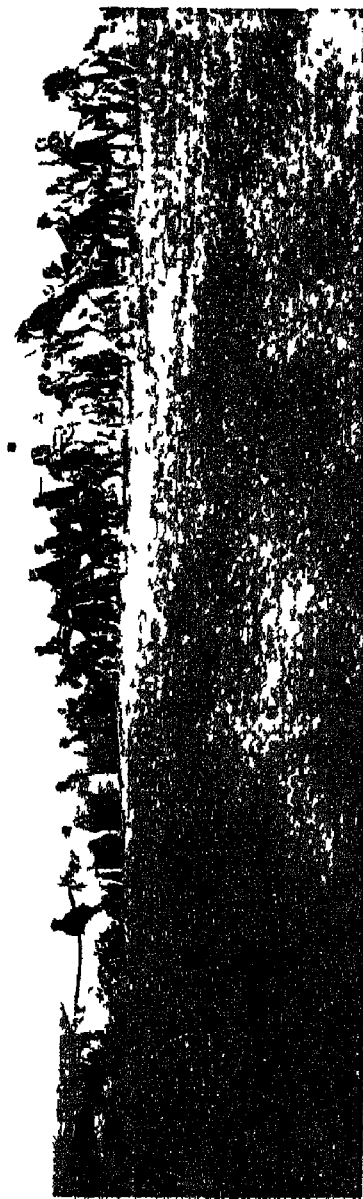
The following day, April 1, Leachman accompanied Sa'dun over a short march of two miles. Sa'dun rode alone at the head of the column with his standard behind him, his martial bearing an inspiring sight to his following; but Leachman noted that when they came to pitch their tents they were more slovenly and less expeditious than the Shammar of Ibn er Rashid. On the other hand the meals were more simple than those provided by the ruler of Hail, and the public *maglis*, although more crowded, provided less talk.

That evening news came in that Ibn Sa'ud had moved out from Jahra and proposed to attack, and the following morning reinforcements rode in consisting of a number of Ma'dan. In spite of the fact that they were reputed to be good fighters they had not the assured bearing of the Bedouin, but they were well armed.

There came, also, many of the Aqail camel merchants to pay levy on their beasts to Sa'dun Pasha. One of these had travelled in England, France, and America, and, desiring to show his friendliness to Leachman by asking him whether he was a traveller, astounded him by saying "You are a liar!"

On April 3 they camped under the ruined fort of Shagra, when an alarm threw them into great confusion but, this proving false, they hid their discomfiture by a war dance in the flickering light of a big camp fire, which added a barbaric setting to the spectacle. Sa'dun, however, had sat and given his orders with great delight at the prospect of a fight.

Leachman's servants, Khidr and Zawa, had had enough of these excitements. Their recent experiences had shattered their nerves, so that the former babbled in the manner of a coward before a fight and the latter, still more demoralized, made hasty preparations to flee to Khamasiya. Leachman dealt



MUNTAFIK ARABS RIDING OUT TO MEET AN ATTACK
(*Photographed by Leachman*)

ruthlessly with their craven fears, so that the danger seemed more easy to be endured than the wrath of their master.

On the 5th the full muster of the clans, some two to three thousand men, paraded before Sa'dun, providing a splendid spectacle for their chief, whose eyes kindled as he watched the detachments thundering by. Each clan had its banner unfurled, and behind these emblems the fierce, bearded men, their *abas* flapping in the wind, brandished their rifles or swords as they shouted their battle-cries. Having plenty of ammunition they fired their Martini rifles with abandon, so that the deep roar of their discharge added a realism to the display. But the Dhafir, who came in next day, were a finer sight still, with their mixture of cavalry and camelry all going past at the gallop or trot. The same evening a guide was ready to accompany Leachman to Samawa on the way to Baghdad, and the prospect of reaching civilization again made him gloat over what he would do to the poltroon Khidr who now, thinking he was safe, added insolence to his cowardice.

On April 7 Leachman bade a regretful farewell to Sa'dun, "this fine old man, so up to date and so courteous, very rich and a splendid soldier and a cordial enemy of the Turks, whom he had beaten in fight on many occasions."

With the good wishes of Sa'dun and armed with the latter's instructions for his safety and comfort, Leachman rode through the shepherd encampments of the riverain Shawawi to Abu Agar, a residence of Sa'dun himself, where he kept his womenfolk and resided himself in the summer months. Here he was hospitably entertained to a meal and continued his journey to the tents of his guide's tribe, the Zaiyad, a shepherd community, very different from the Bedouin, but well-to-do and well armed. They

were hospitable too and their women went unveiled, perhaps with safety, for they were not beautiful.

Leachman was now approaching Baghdad and had to move with great caution, for the Turks were aware of his departure from the camp of Ibn er Rashid and were trying to intercept him and deal with him for unlawful travel. It was vital to Leachman that they should not catch him in the act and that he should enter Baghdad without their knowledge. He chose his line of approach very skilfully, zigzagging among the various camps of riverain tribes so that his tracks might become confused till he was close to Samawa on the Euphrates on April 12. All the bridges and normal ferries were guarded by the Turks, principally for Customs purposes, which fact made it necessary to cross elsewhere. He spent a day prospecting the means. On the 14th his unwilling camels were shoved into the Akshan branch of the Euphrates, after great difficulty, and swam across by the side of a *shukhtur*. He was now in a country much cut up by the irrigation channels between the two rivers and, for one of the few times in his experience, received somewhat unwilling hospitality from Sahn Ibn Sha'lan, sheikh of the Nhaza'il, who far from liking Sa'dun did not see why he should love his protégé. Leachman, therefore, thought it wise to curtail his visit and passed on to Hamza on the now dry Hail branch of the river where he stayed with the local *saiyid*, a "regular Falstaff, very fat and very jolly, who, however, entertained about eighteen people on a single chicken."

He now moved with redoubled caution. His disguise afforded a splendid protection, but he could afford to take no risks and the nearer he approached Baghdad the greater the danger of detection became.

On the other hand his foresight in exploring the

country carefully before he left Baghdad, and during his tour round Karbela and Najaf, brought its reward, for not only had he made, on that occasion, certain most valuable contacts of persons who were genuinely antagonistic to the Turks, and who were now only too willing to aid him; but the knowledge of the country itself which he had gained on his "shooting" expeditions, proved invaluable. Indeed, it is intensely interesting to note how the minute care with which he prepared the ground before his departure was now utilized by him to outwit the officials who had been warned that he would probably attempt to reach Baghdad secretly.

Leachman was now in a part of the country where everyone appeared to be at war with everyone else. He gave Diwaniya, the centre of the trouble, a wide berth and, avoiding all groups of people he saw, he reached the small village Jasim. When he arrived at the khan, he found it was full of soldiers. Nevertheless he spent the night at the house of one of his "contacts" right under the eyes of the Turks. In this manner he passed through the Euphrates country successfully. Suddenly, "through the asinine folly of Khidr," he was nearly betrayed by an awkward question, asked by one of the *saiyids* of Karbela. This man had probably seen him during his visits to that city, but he now failed to recognize him, though he happened to be staying for the night at the Ma'amuia camp, when Leachman put up there after giving Hilla a wide berth. Through the folly of his servant he had to admit that he was a Christian, which produced a violent protest from the Shia guests, that ignorance of that fact had caused them to drink out of the same cup of coffee as he had. Leachman assumed one of those violent passions which had so devastating an effect. He sprang to his feet and bitterly upbraided the objectors for their

lack of courtesy, "which," he said, "was of such a kind as he had never encountered and which placed them on the lowest level. He could no longer stay in the same company as such low-bred fellows." He started to leave the tent so as to profit by the consternation his railing tongue had caused, and escape. The humbled *saiyids*, however, implored his pardon and begged him to stay. Yielding to their importunity he remained, but insisted on eating his dinner alone.

Although a stranger in a strange land and in spite of the risks he ran, Leachman would not countenance an insult, and his final action kept inviolate his pride in himself as an Englishman, a dignity he valued above all else and one he would never surrender even in the face of the most pressing danger.

The following night Leachman spent near the Baghdad-Hilla road with the Dalaim "with a *maglis* (meeting) like a kennel of dogs." Here two Turkish gendarmes came in during the night but failed to penetrate his disguise. He was now almost at the gates of Baghdad. He made a wide circle avoiding Mahmudiya and, crossing the high road north of Khan Mufattish, he lay low during the day among some Arabs outside the Jisr al Kharr bridge till darkness fell, then, mingling with the throng, he entered Baghdad at 7 p.m. A short while later a horrified sentry at the British Residency tried to stop a ragged Bedouin from entering. The staff were at first equally abusive and attempted to turn him out. A short time later that selfsame Bedouin was dining with his Excellency.

Writing from Baghdad two days later, on April 23, Leachman gave his people the following brief account of his adventures:

"I kept my intention a dead secret and managed to get away from Baghdad to Karbela,

a town sixty miles out on the edge of the desert. I had managed with some Arab friends of mine to have camels waiting for me outside the town, but when I tried to go to them I found myself followed by the police. I scared them off by going into a date garden by one door, and while they waited at one door I walked out at the back door and got away. I travelled south-west with a tribe of Bedouin for three weeks, when we were attacked and the whole crowd captured by another tribe. The new tribe, however, gave me protection, but four days after, in a big fight, the new tribe was routed by another. I lost most of my stuff this time, but managed to get away with three camels and got to the Emir of Hail, which latter place you will find on the map. He treated me very well but refused to let me go ; I was a month with him wandering about, I finally managed to make him let me go, but he would only send me down to the settled countries. I came down to near Kuweit at the head of the Persian Gulf. I made my way up through the tribes on the Euphrates and landed myself and camels safely in Baghdad two days ago. I had a very good time of it, though, of course, it was rather a strain, and these people have the reputation of being some of the most fanatical Moslems in the world. They all treated me excessively well, however, though I acknowledged myself as a Christian. I took a large supply of medicines with me, and used them much, which helped me a lot. I killed none of them. I saw a lot of fighting and had many wounds to deal with. The Turks in their delightful way, being annoyed at my having gone, published in their beastly rags of papers articles saying that all

sorts of horrible things had happened to me, and, till they got used to it, causing my friends in Baghdad much alarm. It is a very lovely country, if one likes the desert, and the Arab is a delightful person, practically without a vice. The air is some of the finest going, though it was a bit hot towards the end, especially to my head, as I was dressed like an Arab. The night I got into Baghdad I went to the Residency, but was refused admission by the sentries and by all the staff, though previously they had all known me well, so I must have been a passable Arab. I am very nearly black, as I have hardly washed for three months, as water is much too precious to waste. All my letters have been sent to Kuweit for some reason, so I don't know what has happened, except that two came here last mail, from which I understand that Father has been ill, but I can't make out what has been the matter with him. I do hope he has recovered, or is recovering. I am tied to a chair to-day as the result of putting on a boot after going barefoot for so long, the said boot having rubbed up all the old cuts and abrasions and poisoned my foot, giving me fever, so I had to have it cut open. I am not staying at the Residency at present, as I have to dissociate myself from the British Government in the sight of the Turks. I thought I should arrive back in civilization to discover that I was a captain, but it does not seem to be so. I really think I shall have to abandon the profession of arms for a time and become a diplomatic servant in this country. I think I could get a consulship in Armenia easily, and there would be more chance of advancement. I am going to wait here for my letters, that is,



MUNTAFIK ARABS RALLYING TO DEFEND THEIR CAMP

(*Photograph by Leachman*)

[*See Page 177*]

for about a fortnight, and then possibly I shall go north to Mosul and round to Syria and do a touch in the Holy Land. I remember I was badly jumped on by Father for not having gone to Babylon and Jerusalem when last in these parts. I have done Babylon, and must now do Jerusalem and wipe out this stain on my reputation. If you will address your letters to the British Residency, Baghdad, via Constantinople, I will arrange to have them sent on. They get here in under a month that way. I think the post goes out from London on a specified day of the week, which you could find out. Never send anything of value by it, by the way. This place is very beautiful at present, as the palms are all very green and the river in flood and any amount of flowers.

"I am enclosing a photograph of my beautiful self in Arab kit, taken when I arrived back. Don't you think I am most Biblical in appearance? I am sorry the Liberals got in again. Things seem in a bad way in England. I am staying in a beautiful house on the river, with a select party of bachelors, and we have a never ceasing stream of every nationality and seldom sit down to dinner with less than four different countries being represented. I am becoming quite a flyer at Arabic, as I should be after three months of nothing else."

CHAPTER XIII

1,300 MILES ON HORSEBACK AND A RECORD DASH BY CAMEL

AFTER the great hardships he had endured during the preceding three months, Leachman would have had every excuse for resting on his laurels and returning to India by the most direct route. He decided, however, to return to that country by an amazingly circuitous route, which included a ride of 1,300 miles.

In his letter to his mother he stated that he intended to go to Mosul and "round" to Syria. Even this information did not disclose his true objective, which was to strike north-east after reaching Mosul and to make a wide detour through the heart of Kurdistan. At the time Leachman did this remarkable journey the country he traversed was but little known. It is, even to-day, wild and forbidding and its inhabitants turbulent, rugged and fierce, in keeping with their surroundings. It was the storm centre of the Middle East; a land steeped in the rivalries of different nationalities, Kurds, Turks, Armenians and Persians; rent by centuries of feuds and made tragic by unceasing vendettas. Moreover, the country as a whole was but little known to Europeans. It is true that its chief towns had their sprinkling of whites, consisting principally of consular representatives and members of various missions; but their knowledge of the country was more local than extensive and attention was concentrated principally on their duties. It was a country concerning which it was difficult to obtain reliable

information, and the British authorities valued greatly any trustworthy information they could procure. Consequently Leachman's journey would be of value to his country and his report would add something to that being patiently and systematically compiled by those responsible for the safety of an empire. Concerning this aspect of his journey Leachman is rightly completely silent and even his diary is a model of circumspection and caution. Reticent by nature, circumstances forced him to become still more reserved. Yet he did not wrap himself up in a cloak of mystery which would have drawn attention to himself, rather he was carefree and happy. His silence regarding his achievements was not regarded as a forced and obvious discretion, but came to be looked upon as a part of himself. So heartily did he enter into the amusements and gaieties of civilization that his friends quickly forgot to question him; but there are many people living to-day who now wish they had not been led astray by his apparent frivolity. All Leachman's journeys were objective, not aimless wanderings. Each had its definite purpose, and, if that purpose was unfulfilled at the first attempt, he would not rest until he had achieved it.

Feeling "a bit delicate" from his social evenings he started on May 10, 1910, on this tremendous ride, with two ponies and accompanied by a groom and two Turkish gendarmes. He must have smiled at the presence of the latter. Only three months previously the Turks had used their gendarmes in an attempt to prevent his starting on his desert journey, and he had given them the slip. Now they escorted him delicately on the road to Mosul, trusting that such courtesy would prevent this very elusive young man from disappearing again in the same mysterious manner,

His principal food consisted of bread and apricots ; it is strange how he, who so loved good food and grumbled if its preparation did not satisfy his fastidious taste, could suddenly subsist for long periods on such meagre and unappetizing fare.

On June 1 he passed through the notorious and dreaded Hamawand country of Jabal Hamrin and slept at the house of the *mudir* (governor) of Kara Tepe, eighty miles north-east of Baghdad. He tells us that this official had a " most beautiful son of fourteen, really beautiful." In Mesopotamia ten years later they both proved loyal and staunch to their British deliverers and that, in spite of great inducements to break their allegiance.

The village of Kara Tepe itself was small, but was forced to accommodate an enormous Turkish garrison installed by the Turks to keep these unruly elements in order and to escort the post through the ambushes which these disgruntled folk delighted in arranging in the wild country which was their homeland. No wonder then, as Leachman tells us, that the arrival of the post was the main topic of conversation with everyone he encountered. Its safe arrival was one up to the Turks, its non-arrival a score for the tribesmen, but they spared time to make coarse remarks to Leachman for his remaining a bachelor so long. Leachman, who loved men who were really men, admired these freebooters of the mountains, " a fine lot of ruffians these Kurds, most picturesque."

The next day he reached Kifri, where the khan was indescribably filthy, but whose people were as polite as their Arabic was bad. At Tauq he saw " the most lovely girl I think I have ever seen."

On June 5 he reached the important town of Kirkuk, one hundred and eighty miles from Baghdad. The governor of the town was a " young Turk, who for his political views, to which he had given too free

an expression, had been imprisoned for seven years during the old régime and now, although young in years, had reaped the reward of his heroism by being appointed governor." He received Leachman in the most charming manner and talked to him frankly about his past experiences.

On June 6 he crossed the Lesser Zab at Altun Kupri, and reached Arbil on the seventh. Although the khan was a new one it was already tenanted by an army of fleas which disturbed his night's rest with their persistence, while the tranquillity of his day was marred by the determined inquisitiveness of the inhabitants regarding his movements, politics and morals, so that he was glad to quit this double source of annoyance the next day.

He had an unexpected pleasure on the day of his departure for, on crossing the Greater Zab, he found waiting to receive him on the other bank, a grand old Turkish veteran who had been present throughout the siege of Plevna and whose body bore three wounds as witness to the fact.

Already the name of Leachman was becoming well known even in these wild regions. As happens in the East, the news of his coming preceded him, and the old Turkish warrior could not forgo meeting the young British officer whose hardihood struck a chord of fellowship in the heart of the old man.

The next day Leachman reached Mosul and the first stage of his journey was accomplished.

At that time Mosul was a city of 40,000 inhabitants, of whom nine-tenths were Moslems, both Kurd and Arab. As usual Leachman was received by the governor, in this case the famous Muhammad Pasha Daghistani, of whom he saw a great deal. Leachman took an instant liking to him—which was reciprocated—"a good all-round sportsman and a fine shot with a rifle." The old man, he was then about sixty,

was utterly fearless and in his younger days a giant in strength. He used to keep lions on the roof of his house which he allowed visitors to inspect, and it was related how, when on one occasion a small child had been dragged through the bars of the cage, Muhammad Pasha, who was hastily summoned, found the lion walking about the cage with the child, still alive, in its jaws. Entering the cage without hesitation he leapt on the lion's back and seized its throat with his mighty hands until it released its captive. When the child was safe he edged the beast towards the door of the cage and calmly slipped out into safety.

Leachman remained at Mosul for eight days. His days were not wasted and he became acquainted with everyone of importance in the place and obtained a good knowledge of the town itself. This knowledge, carefully stored up in his mind, was to prove of the greatest value to him and to the British within eight years.

On June 17 Leachman once more took to the road and re-crossed the Greater Zab on a skin raft at a spot higher up than his first crossing, resting the second night at the Kurdish village of Darband. Here he nearly got into trouble and the inhabitants became greatly excited and "were rather unpleasant as the fool of a *zaptieh* took us to the mosque," but Leachman's calmness soothed their ruffled feelings and they parted good friends, their fanaticism overcome by his unruffled bearing and calm demeanour. This was not the first occasion on which he had proved himself to be a shrewd judge of the attitude he should adopt. His mind instantly prompted him aright, and whether it guided him to a display of demoniac passion or whether it assumed a studied indifference, it suited the occasion and led him to safety.

Leaving Darband he lost his way in the confusion of a maze of hills and streams, but eventually struck the Arbil-Rowanduz road at the village of Balaal Zaiq, where every summer the fleas drive the inhabitants away from their homes to reside in grass huts, as was the case, he tells us, with all the villages in that part of the country; but the people were prosperous with large herds of sheep and cows and blessed with the most beautiful women.

The next day he again lost his way, which put him into ill-humour, and "after wandering over awful paths on the tops of mountains" he recovered the road and passed "through a beastly gorge with a river running through it." He was in no humour to admire the majestic Rowanduz Gorge, one of the most impressive and awesome features of the Kurdish Mountains.

On Midsummer Day, Leachman reached Rowanduz itself, a little town situated 1,700 ft. above sea-level and divided into two sections which he describes as typifying paradise and hell. On the rising ground beautiful gardens, stocked with a great variety of fruit trees and made fragrant with cool breezes mixed with the scent of flowers and shrubs. Below, a huddled mass of mean shops joined by dark and evil-smelling alleys, carpeted with dung and swarming with flies.

From Rowanduz Leachman passed through the disputed territory lying along the Turco-Persian border and which was shortly to be delimited by an international boundary commission, of whom one of the British Representatives would be Lieut. (later Sir Arnold) A. T. Wilson, and whom Leachman had recently met at Muhammara.

The whole district through which he journeyed during the next week afforded a strong contrast to the inhospitable and rugged Kurdish mountains.

Vast plains covered with villages and castles and all manner of trees spread before him ; glorious valleys, made fertile and smiling by a multitude of mountain torrents, nestled in the shade of towering poplars and cool almond trees, till he reached Paswa, then flying the Turkish flag but now well within the Persian border. It had at the time of Leachman's visit only recently been seized by the Turks, as also had Nagirda and its one hundred and fifteen villages set "in the most perfect plain of Saldiz." The ruler of the latter place had been but recently in Persian service, but now was just as happy in the guise of a Turkish pasha, with authority supported by a detachment of two hundred men from the regiment at Paswa.

On the 26th Leachman reached Shiunn, a large and prosperous place half concealed in its poplars and fruit trees and with a bazaar in which he found nothing of English make. He was now in the vilayet of Van. He was, as usual, entertained by the *quaim* to an "enormous" dinner, at which his host and a friend showed their toleration of Muhammadan precepts by quaffing large quantities of brandy. The repast was followed by a musical entertainment and a dancing display by a youth "dressed as a girl and more or less misbehaving."

A march of seven hours on the 28th brought him out on to the beautiful and prolific plain of Urmiya. Leachman gives us the following brief but interesting account of the city as it was at the time of his visit :

"The walled city of Urmiya with a population of 20,000 stands at a height of 4,400 ft. above sea-level, is a Persian city and strongly under Russian influence. The Czar's government is represented by a consul with a bodyguard of forty men. The Russian consul also had at

his disposal a private telegraph office, while Turkey is represented by a *Shabandar*, or diplomatic agent, with a similar escort.

"The place is full of missions, including that of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Nestorians, and an American Presbyterian Mission which maintains a college two miles outside the town.

"There is a special quarter for Christians. The bazaars which are sun-roofed are splendid and are very clean and have magnificent shops and khans. The road from the town to the Lake of Urmial passes through miles of beautiful orchards till it reaches the shore of the lake at Girmakhana. The lake itself is most beautifully blue and very salt."

Leachman spent a full week in the city, resting from his 279 miles' march from Mosul. The time passed most pleasantly, if indolently. He made the acquaintance of everyone of importance of all nationalities, all of whom treated him with kind hospitality, nor did he neglect the humbler members of the community from whom he obtained a mass of useful and interesting information. He was treated with the greatest courtesy by all with whom he came into contact. His charm won him friendships which lasted till his death, and his wit and good humour made all men at ease in his presence.

A few years later England reaped the benefit of the work done by Leachman and other splendid men, whose quiet assured dignity, and modesty, and courage, confirmed native belief in the greatness of the country they represented. For each of these intrepid wanderers was regarded as typical of the whole nation. The responsibility of such men was great, although they did not think of it, for the effect of a foolish act, a discourtesy or misdemeanour would have continued down the years and been

counted, not against the man committing it, but against his country.

Leachman's stay in Urmiya was in the main uneventful, he was not out for adventures, but to pass quietly on his way observing and storing up the knowledge he acquired; but it gave him rest of which he was badly in need after his continuous exertions. He had a long journey still before him and only a limited time in which to accomplish it, so he could not delay for long. On July 6, therefore, he left for Van, one hundred and seventy-eight miles distant in a north-easterly direction. On July 7 he crossed what is to-day the frontier of Turkey to "the lovely village of Mar Bishu," built literally, for the sake of warmth, into the sides of a gorge, cleft precipitously through tremendous hills. The population was mostly Christian and, as so frequently happened to the Christian population, in the evening of Leachman's arrival a large party of Kurds arrived, "apparently sponging on the village."

Troubled by fleas at night and by dysentery both night and day, and handicapped by lame ponies, he doggedly pressed on, passing through Diza in the Gawar plain, with the lovely mountains of the Jehu range bounding it on the west. Through Bishqala and Khushab with its ancient castle, "perched on a huge rock in the middle of the village," and where for the first time he met with incivility, until suddenly on July 10, on topping the hill, the mighty lake of Van, with its snow-capped Sipah Dagħ forming an inspiring background to the city itself, burst into view.

From Van he found an opportunity to write home, and his letter is headed "English Mission, Van, July 16, 1910":

"I had a most delightful week at Urmiya

over in Persia and was quite sorry to leave. The Americans there used to take me expeditions every day and so I saw a good deal of the country and the people. I came through the mountains in seven days to this place. The road was ghastly, but the scenery magnificent. I stayed in villages, the people of which are Nestorian Christians, and speak ancient Syriac. They are a good lot and very hospitable, but are very much oppressed by the Kurds, who come down into the villages and live there for days and then carry off goods and cattle and girls. A lot came to a village in which I was staying one night ; they were an extraordinary fine lot of ruffians, and were very nice to me. I touched snow several times coming across and felt quite chilly though the elevation was never above 9,000 ft. I reached this place two days ago, and at once realized the Arab proverb, ' Van in this world, paradise in the next.' The town is situated at one end of a lake eighty miles long. It is walled and in the middle is a rock rising 400 ft. out of the city with a wonderful fort on the top. A couple of miles outside the city is what is called the ' Garden City,' where the best people live in the midst of beautiful trees and orchards. These stretch for several miles. Across the lake stands up an ancient volcano with snowy crest called Sifran Dugh and all the edges have huge black mountains quite close. I found the consular officer, and he was not living in Van but with the two other Englishmen here. Was out at a place called Artemid about eight miles from Van, in camp on the edge of the lake. I came out to Artemid where I am now. The camp is in a wood within ten feet of the lake, and except for bathing one

does nothing but sit and laze, and berries and apricots drop off the trees into one's mouth. I unfortunately celebrated my arrival by one of the worst goes of fever I have had for ages. It must have been the cold or rather the cool after the heat, but it rather alarmed three people who have not seen fever of the Indian variety. I am all right now, but don't like to bathe as much as I would like. There are some Americans here too, oldish inhabitants. They were here in the two great massacres, in the most recent of which, three years ago, many thousands of Armenians were killed; I rather feel for the Turks, for the Armenians are a nasty people. I shall be here for a week or so, and then shall try and tear myself away. I rather want to go over to Nimrod which is across the lake, another volcano with the most perfect crater in the world. Then I shall go to Bitlis I expect."

Leaving Van he coasted along the shores of the lake for four days until he reached the road to Bitlis, where three valleys join to form the actual head of the mighty Tigris at an elevation of 5,000 ft.

On the way he visited the monastery of Akhavank, on the island of Antamar, which used to be the seat of the Armenian catholics, until the Turks abolished the Archimandrite. He also visited "the most ancient Armenian church going" and "where I was pestered for tips and regret having tipped these people too much. They say it is for the repairs, but I should think it is for their stomachs." He then passed through Nannakan, "a beastly little village with many staring, badly behaved people," which confirms his personal impressions of the Armenians quoted in his previous letter.

On July 30 he wrote from Bitlis :

“ The journey to this place which took about five days is very easy. The road runs along the borders of the lake practically the whole way. I stopped at an Armenian monastery one night and sailed out two hours to an island on which is an Armenian church of the tenth century, the oldest (at present) in existence. Another day I made a detour and climbed into the crater of Nimrod ; it is about 8,500 ft. high, 3,000 above the plain. The breadth is five and a half miles, the whole of one half being taken up by a lake. I camped up there and indulged in a hot bath at a hot spring. Bitlis is a big place built in a deep hole in the mountains. The Tigris rises, or rather has one of its sources, here. I am staying with an Armenian, for there is only a Russian consul here, and though there is an English consulate, there is no consul. It is a bit hot, but not unpleasantly so. It is one of the great massacre places, at which they usually begin ; they killed over a thousand Armenians here a year or two ago. I am staying here a couple of days and then descend to the heat of Diarbekr and on to Aleppo and ought to reach the latter place some time about August 20, and Damascus a few days later. I ought to find a pretty heavy mail awaiting there, three months' full mails, and many letters which have been wandering about for the last six months. By the way I stayed one night with a certain native doctor by name Alexander ; he is a Nestorian, and used to doctor and more or less missionize in the mountains. The Kurds, however, came down and wrecked his place and he says he is shortly going to England and America to get help. If he, by any chance, turns up will you offer him every hospitality in return for what

he did for me. He is a trustworthy person, and honest in his ideas, but I have told him that it is very difficult to get people in Europe to part with money for private individuals and not for societies. If you are itching to give away money to charity, there is a very fine mission in these parts called the 'Archbishop's Mission to the Nestorians.' It is run by Canterbury and is doing a lot of good."

At Bitlis he found the British consular agent, Mr. Safrastian, "a talented young man and the Russian consul, Chirko, an old and stupid person but quite genial. The town itself is wonderfully picturesque, built round an old castle and with fine houses constructed of great stone blocks." He also met a splendid old American lady, Miss Eley, who, together with her sister, had been forty-two years at Bitlis doing missionary work.

Two days were sufficient for Bitlis and on August 15 he resumed his march towards his next objective, Diarbekr, passing through Ziyarat and Bismil, where he found the Tigris a wretched little stream fordable anywhere. Shortly after leaving the latter place he chanced upon a small Armenian village in the midst of the hills being attacked by a body of Turkish soldiery.

Leachman sat on a rock on the top of a hill overlooking the village to watch the encounter. The Armenians were partly already concealed among the rocks on the hillside and partly firing from the shelter of their houses and were putting up a very spirited resistance. Leachman, with his elbows on his knees and head bent forward, was completely absorbed in what was happening when he was startled to hear from just behind him in a broad American accent, "Say, there sure is some sort of a

scrap going on down there." Leachman looked round and saw standing behind him a youngish man calmly smoking a cigarette, very nattily dressed, with highly polished brown boots, a white collar, and, above all things, a straw hat. It was this last article which caused Leachman the greatest astonishment, being the last form of headdress he expected to see in the midst of the Armenian mountains. Under the hat was undoubtedly an Armenian and how he got there and where he had obtained such sartorial splendour Leachman was at a complete loss to imagine. But the stranger quickly enlightened him.

"I have just returned from the States," he said, "where I have been for fifteen years and made quite a nice pile. My pa and ma live down there and I was coming to visit them, but it looks to me I shall have to wait a bit as I don't want to get my clothes spoilt."

But this little anecdote has been related not for its humorous aspect but for its sequel.

"What!" said Leachman, "you have been away for fifteen years from your people and they can't see your nice clothes till this fight is over? Nonsense! Come with me!"

"What are you going to do?" asked the astonished Armenian.

"Take you to your ma and pa. Come along."

In great trepidation the astonished man, treading delicately among the boulders so as not to scratch his shining shoes, followed his strange companion. Leachman walked straight down into the middle of the fray. Both parties were so astonished that they held their fire and Leachman made for the nearest Turk, a very fat N.C.O., who gaped and blinked at him as if he was some supernatural apparition. He asked where an officer was, but one was actually coming towards him. Leachman asked in French

if he was commanding, but the man shook his head and pointed to another farther off, to whom Leachman strode up and said that it was absolutely essential that his companion should see his father and mother. The officer grinned broadly, but said such a procedure was unheard of, whereupon Leachman replied, "Well, he is going to see his father and mother and I am going with him. Kindly give orders that no one shoots us." The officer, who was obviously a sportsman, agreed, and Leachman saw his new friend safely home, returned and thanked the officer and straightway continued his journey.

Leachman characteristically made no reference to this incident either in his diary or letters, but one night sitting alone with him on the roof of his house in Karbela, when all the city was asleep, he told the story to me as being one of the most amusing incidents of his march, and I did not know which to admire most, his kindness of heart, his foolhardy courage, or his colossal cheek.

How many incidents in his amazing life are lost to us and what a story he himself could have told had he wished! It is a thousand pities he did not write his story, as he was pressed to do times without number, but he obstinately refused, always giving the same answer, "One would feel such an ass."

Leachman reached Diarbekr on the 5th and stayed there only a day and a half. On the 7th, accompanied for part of the way by Mr. Thomas, the Armenian dragoman of the British consulate, he started on the last section of his journey. He reached Urfa on the 10th, leaving again on the 13th and passing through most uninteresting country to the Euphrates, which he reached and crossed on the same day on a *shakhtur*. The river was only one hundred and fifty yards wide, but after crossing he had to do a very long and exhausting march, having

being misled with regard to water. His horse was completely exhausted and was only just able to struggle into Bab where, as he wrote later, it died the same evening.

The next day Leachman reached Aleppo, where he stayed at a disgusting hotel called the "Palace," and the great march of 1,300 miles was completed. His adventures, however, were by no means ended, for he was about to visit Syria and Palestine and cross the great Western Desert in a sensational manner, as will be described.

He left Aleppo by train to Damascus on August 18 and wrote from that place on August 21, describing his journey from Aleppo, and giving other interesting details :

"I came down here in fifteen hours of perfectly villainous travelling. It was very hot and there were always twelve people in the carriage. The journey through the Lebanon is lovely, however. The train follows a river through a wonderful gorge for five hours. It was night but (there was) a brilliant moon and the view was perfect. This place is much nicer in the summer than in the winter. The trees are getting beautiful and, most of them being olives, all of the very darkest green. . . . I was much flattered by receiving a letter from the Royal Geographical Society inviting me to lecture this November on my travels, and, in default, they wish to publish a paper of mine in the *Journal*. I grew quite visibly on reading it. The Government and Embassy are still very agitated about my movements, as they seem to have missed the fact that I went back to Baghdad after starting on my second travel and imagine that I am still with the Bedouin. . . .

I shall be leaving here some time this week and go down to the lake of Tiberias and so to Jerusalem and then across by Jerico to the Hedjaz railway, getting back here in about a month, and then by desert and camel to Baghdad. . . . Damascus is at the present time the centre of bloody war. The Turks are fighting a great tribe called the Druze near here and the city resounds with the march of armed men and the blowing of bugles. I have been troubled with a very bad hand. . . . some police who were sent to escort me through a dangerous piece of country, were very late on the road, and, thinking I should report them, one of them tried to kiss my hand which is the sign of conciliation in this country. In doing so he jabbed his rifle into my hand and after(wards) it got poisoned. The whole country is agog with wonderful schemes for new railways and, as a result, overrun by very bad specimens of Germans. At a hotel in Aleppo I had to uphold the Empire by force of arms with a not very sober bespectacled German.

I played polo yesterday with some Turkish officers. The game consisted of riding an untrained pony over small species of ditches in company with seven other untrained, kicking ponies. I was in a cold perspiration the whole time."

On August 30 he wrote again, giving his further adventures :

" You see I am now a pilgrim. I left Damascus about a week ago, and came down by the famous Hedjaz railway to the Sea of Galilee. I crossed the lake of Tiberias where I stayed in the Franciscan monastery. Tiberias isn't much of

a place, but stands out rather nicely with Crusader towers into the lake. The lake is most picturesque. It is surrounded by hills on all sides which take beautiful colours upon them at different hours of the day. That is one of the charms of this country, though very barren and bare the colours are beautiful. From Tiberias I sailed across to Capernaum, past the supposed site of Bethsaida. I thought my last day had come, as on my way back we were caught in a royal storm and shipped tons of water. I got drenched to the skin. Tiberias was very hot and I was jolly glad to leave it. I rode from there to Nazareth which takes about five hours. . . . From Nazareth I drove to Haifa on the sea and spent a day on Mount Carmel. The view is magnificent. I took ship from Haifa to Jaffa which takes a night. I think I never had a more uncomfortable journey. I started by having my leg cut open by a native who demanded some money. This led to a rough and tumble on the deck in which I came off much the best as, in manœuvring for the attack, one of the chief offenders fell down the gangway into the sea. Of course the people in this country are the most loathsome in the world ; and I am treated better, probably because I know Arabic. From Jaffa I came up by train to Jerusalem, which takes four hours. I rather expected to hate Jerusalem, but it is really quite nice. . . . I expect I shall be here a week to ten days. At present I am a wreck, as I get fever every evening. . . . The hotel is peculiarly beastly though it is the best."

From Jerusalem he made his way back on September 9 to Damascus via Jerico and the mountains

of Moab to Amman, where he boarded the train and found himself herded into a crowded third-class carriage. The train was only derailed once, which appeared to have been exceptionally fortunate. Damascus was reached in fourteen hours. There he remained for three weeks, at the end of which period he set out on what was, in certain respects, the most remarkable of his recent journeys.

On September 27 Leachman drove out in comfort in a carriage and pair from Damascus to the village of Dumair, situated on the very edge of the Syrian desert.

Here there were awaiting him a small party of hardy, wiry-looking Arabs, Hamdan and Abdul Razzaq, Leachman's Aquil companions, and some Bedouin guides. Crouching by them was a group of splendid camels. Not content with the exertions he had so recently undergone, Leachman was now about to submit himself deliberately to a most severe ordeal in order to test the limit of his stamina.

From the spot where he stood beside his camel at Dumair the desert stretched away for some 540 miles to Baghdad. He now proposed to attempt to cross this inhospitable and uninspiring stretch in record time on camel-back, and to pit his own powers of endurance against those of his hardy companions who had been born and bred to the desert life.

They were all well mounted. They had need to be, for only beasts of the finest breeding could be expected to survive such an ordeal. Their supplies of food were reduced to the absolute minimum, and consisted of a few bags of dates, packed tightly to save space.

Leachman hoped to reach Baghdad in ten days—a formidable task when the length of the journey, the great heat, the scarcity of water and the nature of the country were taken into consideration, and, as



LEACHMAN'S CAMELS BEING WATERED ON HIS FAMOUS
RECORD-MAKING RIDE FROM DAMASCUS TO BAGHDAD
[See Page 203] *(Photograph by Leachman)*

an average of fifty-four miles a day had to be maintained, prospects of succeeding appeared remote. The success of the undertaking lay not in traversing a limited extent of country at the greatest possible speed, but in maintaining a high rate of progress night and day continually for a comparatively long period.

They proposed to follow the post road, or Darb-al-sa'i, which ran somewhat north of the present motor track, and to reach the Euphrates in the neighbourhood of Hit.

The party lost no time in getting under way and were soon swinging along at a rapid pace due east. Travelling steadily for two days and nights, they reached the wells of Saba Abyar; but here they wasted no time, in spite of the fact that an uncomfortable saddle had chafed Leachman badly, making riding a matter of great discomfort and pain. After leaving Saba Abyar the strain of their almost ceaseless exertions began to tell on men and beasts.

The monotonous nature of the country made the days seem interminably long. The vast distances over which the eye could roam created the illusion that but small progress was being made. Landmarks seen on the horizon at dawn appeared appreciably no nearer as the sun set. When night fell and the rapid advance continued, darkness hid all but a few yards of dimly-seen flatness. Conversation began to lag and then ceased altogether, and they pressed forward in grim silence. The beasts, too, began to lose their momentum and the extra effort needed to urge them forward increased the fatigue of their riders. Moreover they had to be constantly on the alert lest they were surprised by roving bands of marauders, so that an added tension was imposed upon their senses.

The first rest was enjoyed at Bir Mulussi, 220 miles

from Damascus. Even here, however, they snatched themselves from their repose after a brief respite and forced their stiff and aching bodics to resume the march, pressing forward to the wells of Mahainir, fifty-five miles farther on. By now the greater part of their journey lay behind them, but they were in sorry plight. The tough Aqail had nearly reached the limit of their endurance and were on the point of complete collapse. Their eyes were glazed, their lips swollen and parched, and their tired bodics sagged in their saddles. Leachman himself was raw and bleeding and, to increase his distress, the strain had brought on a recurrence of malaria. All were suffering from lack of sleep and endured the added torture of fighting their numbed brains.

But Leachman refused to abandon the attempt. Through feverish lips he mocked the Aqail and dubbed them women until, driven to a frenzy by his taunts and bitter jibes, they drew on latent reserves of strength and battled sullenly forward.

At last, early on October 4, the Euphrates was reached in the neighbourhood of Kubicisa. Four hundred and forty miles had been covered in exactly seven days at an average of nearly sixty-three miles a day, and only one hundred miles remained to be traversed.

The thought gave them added strength and with a last superhuman effort they reached Baghdad on October 6, the ninth day of their journey. They had thus accomplished the journey in a day under the ambitious limit they had set themselves. In Leachman's diary on the final day of his amazing feat is this most significant entry :

" Down to Jahannum or up to the throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone."

Was it chance which made him write this couplet,

or was it deliberately entered? It so admirably sums up his life. For he travelled life furiously and he travelled it alone. There is something debonair and reckless about these lines and his quotation of them. Do they, inadvertently, give us a glimpse into Leachman's soul?

The party were completely exhausted but proud and happy in the knowledge that they had covered the Western Desert on camel-back in a time never likely to be rivalled. Two days later Leachman informed his mother of his safe arrival :

" I have arrived safe, but decidedly unsound," he wrote. " We did the journey of some 500 miles in nine days and seemed never to stop and never to sleep. We left the outskirts of Damascus on Monday night and, going due east reached water (the Euphrates) on the other side of the desert, in exactly seven days. We were riding about sixteen hours a day. I was unfortunate in that I had a go of fever in the middle. I was glad to find that the other Arabs, Bedouins, were just as done up as I was at the end. I reached here, Baghdad, on Thursday at dawn, riding the last thirty miles with a halt of two hours only. I came on board the gunboat here and slept and slept without ceasing, while they patched me up as parts of me were sore, very. I am recovering slowly but am still tired and sore."

Writing again on October 21 he once more referred to his journey :

" I have only just recovered from my fatigue from my journey across. I slept for fifteen hours a day for a week after it. I am jolly glad I did it, it is classed as a feat ; but I shall think a good lot before I do it again."

His leave was now nearly up. On the eighteenth he had boarded the river boat *Majidiya* for the voyage down to Basra, but owing to a sudden outbreak of cholera the boat had had to undergo five days' detention at the quarantine island of Qarrara, a few miles below the city, and had to take not less than five days for the journey down.

It is no wonder then that Leachman wrote rather a disgruntled letter to his father :

" I am having a most mouldy time. Cholera has appeared in Baghdad, as it has everywhere else it seems, and all the down-boats on the river have been put into quarantine. So here I am stewed up in a steamer about two hours out of Baghdad. . . . It is luckily quite cool now ; but the ship is not pleasant. It is quite small and yet we have over three hundred pilgrims on board going to Mecca, and they are quite smelly. . . . I found Baghdad tremendously changed ; they have a new *wali*, or governor, who has pulled down all the fine old places, and cut roads, and whitewashed. All very laudable, but it has spoilt the place. Everyone was suffering from the hot weather and had a regular ' end-of-the-summer ' sort of air, so it was dull, all except the Resident and Co. who are ever merry. They were all in the throes of a row, such as places with about ten Europeans in it love to have, and one half were not speaking to the other half and nothing else was talked about. I shudder to think what a liver I shall have when I have finished this trip, eat, sleep, drink, and smoke being the programme. The dates are ripe, and a fresh date is a thing to die for."

He reached Basra on October 27 and two days

later embarked on the S.S. *Kola* for India to rejoin his regiment at Rawal Pindi.

So ended ten months of astonishing achievements. Summed up they present an extraordinary record :

Leachman left Karbela on January 26 and carried out a desert exploration of some 750 miles, returning to Baghdad on April 10. He left Baghdad on May 29 to ride through Kurdistan and Anatolia for a distance of 1,300 miles to Aleppo, which he reached on August 10. He traversed the greater portion of Palestine and finally crossed 540 miles of desert in nine days. He therefore travelled about 2,590 miles on horseback or on camel, in wild and difficult country, in one hundred and fifty-four days, including halts. He had traversed mountains and wandered over deserts. He had been parched with thirst and nearly drowned. He had lived like a prince and subsisted like a beggar. He had seen battle and death. He had escaped from the vigilance of the Turks and the fanaticism of the Arabs. He had proved himself in very truth a man.

CHAPTER XIV

FAILURE !

IN the first week of November, 1910, Leachman reached Rawal Pindi just previous to the regiment's return from the hills. He did not find it easy to settle down to normal regimental life in a big station. Indeed the change was a drastic one in all ways. For many months he had been his own master ; now he would once more become a cog in a vast machine. The very language he spoke, his clothes, his food, the routine of his days, his companions, all would now be different and it would seem as if he had been transplanted into a new world. Even the covering of the earth was transformed. Trees, and flowers and green lawns now took the place of barrenness and sand ; cold days and frosty nights numbed his body after its exposure to the pitiless sun of Arabia.

Now would come the supreme test as to whether he could carry out his mission and complete the great task he had set himself and which he had left but half completed, or whether the luxuries and ease and the happy companionship of civilization would wean him from an undertaking which, outwardly, had only hardship, suffering, loneliness and dangers to offer him.

The choice lay entirely in his own hands. There was no one to compel him to venture again into those dreary and turbulent wastes. He had performed a creditable feat. He had received a merited recompense judged from a material standpoint. His

powers of endurance had been tested to their extreme limits. His reputation as an explorer was fully established.

No one would have wondered if he now abandoned so uncertain and dangerous a course for the safer paths of a military career. His absence for so long a time caused him no inconsiderable loss and inconvenience on his return. He voiced his dissatisfaction in his first letter from Rawal Pindi, written on November 9, but already there were clear signs that his restless nature was seeking a fresh outlet for his inexhaustible energies :

" I come to anchor at last you see, and it feels odd not to be jostled about by a boat or a train. I only stopped the day in Karachi, and from there it takes the best part of forty-eight hours to get up here, and a filthy journey it is. I found things most peaceful here ; the regiment comes down from the hills in two days. There seem to be no one in the mess, everyone being married, and the people they marry are awful. I am most annoyed ; I find I have to live in a tent as there are no houses and it is beastly cold already. After being under the sky for so long, I did hope to be in a house. Besides I feel the cold horribly now after the toasting I have had this year.

" Another disaster has happened. I left all my clothes behind when I went to Arabia and nearly everything has been ruined by white ants which have bored holes through them all. It will cost me a pretty penny rigging myself out. It is most extraordinary that one cannot get one's things looked after when one goes away . . . we go out on manœuvres on the 23rd and don't get back before Christmas, I believe. I

wish it would turn to a show on the frontier. I was nearly a month getting here from Baghdad, and it does make one feel a worm if one isn't used to sitting still."

The next four months passed in the manner usual in a big military station in India during the winter season. Strenuous work, for it was the time for manœuvres, drills and inspections, combined with hunting, polo and an amazing number of dances, were sufficient to occupy mind and body without respite, save for the greatly curtailed hours of sleep. Into all these activities Leachman entered with his usual tireless energy, till heavy rain put a stop to his sports. A forced inaction for a portion of the day was quite sufficient to make him fume with impatience, and feel aggrieved that the elements should even for a time suppress the effervescence of his vigour, and then when the rain was at its worst he furnished an example of that courage and unselfish devotion which gives a sanctity to his life.

Writing from Rawal Pindi on March 16 he gave the following simple account of an experience which cannot fail to create a deep impression on the mind :

" I have had some bad days. It has been pouring with rain for days and the country is almost impassable. On Monday afternoon a message came in to say that a young officer of ours had been drowned while out on a reconnaissance alone. I sallied out on a horse at once and rode to the place where I heard it had happened and found it was eight miles further, so I splashed about the country half the night in most awful rain. I found he had tried to cross a river at the wrong place and fallen off his horse in a pool. The water was most icy cold

and I could not stay in for more than one dive and as the hole was twenty feet deep it was hard to get down. I came in yesterday feeling rather dilapidated without finding the body and I'm afraid we shan't. Bad luck, he had been out only two months. All I have done is to knock up two ponies. It is twenty-eight miles away, and I have to go out again to-night and it's pelting. There doesn't seem anyone capable of speaking the language so I have to go."

In spite of lack of knowledge of the language by others, one wonders why Leachman was permitted to venture out alone on this gruesome mission. Were there no others to accompany him in the pelting night, if only to hearten him with their presence? It is noteworthy that this unselfish man gave on his return no account of his heroic action, but merely stated that he had, unfortunately, been unable to recover the body.

There are certain episodes in Leachman's life which are worthy of being immortalized on canvas or in stone, and surely this is one of them. The blackness of the night, made more obscure by the rain-sodden clouds. The loneliness of the spot, the shivering, silent, and wondering natives who had at last conducted him to the scene of the tragedy, the swiftly flowing torrent, swollen and sinister, and that ghastly deep wherein lay the body of that luckless young fellow. Then the man tired and sodden, the pouring rain streaming down his clothes chilling his courage as he gazed into the inky blackness of that unknown pool. Finally the magnificent triumph of his sense of duty which sent him plunging headlong into the freezing waters.

Within a week Leachman presents us with another side of his nature, a biting sarcasm, slashed by his

pen across the pages of a letter to his father. There is a temptation to suppress this letter, which no doubt was regretted as soon as it was despatched, but that cannot be. We want to know the man as he is, with his grand virtues and his very human frailties :

" I received your most severe and a little un-called for letter concerning my great extravagance. You jump to conclusions. Because I happen to have not paid a bill for a long time, does it follow that I have been very extravagant? The bill in question has not been paid for the simple reason that it is not correct.

" Your remark that I should never buy anything that I cannot pay for is fine in theory but not in practice. For example, in the profession to which I belong, we are unfortunately compelled to wear certain clothes on certain occasions ; one cannot go to the mess in pyjamas so one has to buy a mess-jacket, and I am afraid that the excuse that one could not pay for it would not be considered a good reason in the eyes of the colonel for coming to mess in pyjamas, and so on. About the only thing I spend money on here which I am not bound to spend is in a certain amount of hospitality. . . . I prefer to be hospitable even if you consider me to be extravagant. . . . However, I will endeavour to curb this wild extravagance, and as I have hopes of another journey on duty soon I may manage to scrape through without being a bankrupt. By the way, with all my faults, if I say I will hand money into a person's account on a certain day, I do it and not eighteen days later.

" With love."

Forgetting the resentment expressed in this letter, it has a special interest for two reasons. The anger

he felt betrayed him into an expression of feeling which is seldom apparent, so that we almost wish we had more of these outbursts which help us to understand his nature better.

His remark that he would prefer to be hospitable, even if it caused his father concern, was perfectly correct and borne out in actual practice. His hospitality was only limited by the means for displaying it. It became proverbial, and was not confined to the society in which he moved normally, for he was equally generous to all and sundry and he would deny himself absolute necessities so that another might not want.

But his anger left him a little more unguarded than is usually the case, for he wrote, "I have hopes of another journey *on duty* soon." [The italics are mine.] There lies the secret of the Turks' interest in his movements and his care to get to Baghdad unnoticed, so that his diaries and notes would not be confiscated if he should be caught before he could deposit them in a place of safety.

That, too, is another reason why we shall never know the full importance of the work Leachman did. The fact that he was now to be given another opportunity of similar work *on duty*, shows that the authorities were satisfied with his previous performance.

Barely four months had gone since Leachman's return, but already his choice was made between a life of comfort and one of hardships, and he preferred the more difficult undertaking to the ease of his present existence, but before he left he had to make the necessary preparation, to mobilize his resources, financial and other, and get into correspondence with his friends in Arabia, all of which took time, so that eight months elapsed before he was able to leave.

Meantime, in spite of the gaiety and sports, Leachman showed his impatience to get away. It was movement he desired. To stay long in one place, however pleasant it might be, irked him.

"I wish I could get home for a bit," he wrote in April. "We have been most gay here lately, but I got very tired of it. We are 'At Home' so often that one has to be very much on one's best behaviour and run round continually feeding old ladies and gurrles."

Nor has he yet forgotten the complaint of his extravagance.

"We had a great race meeting and I enjoyed it, chiefly because I made a lot of money. Another instance of my fearful extravagance. . . . Did you read my effort in the *Geographical Journal*, it was rather feeble? I nearly fell down dead the other day at hearing that I had received the Gill Memorial from the R.G.S. (Royal Geographical Society); it is only worth about forty pounds, but it is a bit of an honour and extremely undeserved. Tell it not abroad but I am off on another jaunt about August, I believe. Somewhere in the same spot only not quite so easy as before. I am staying the summer in Pindi; I ought to go to the hills, but I have been left to command our men here. I don't mind much but it isn't my turn, so keep a grumble."

In June he received a most encouraging communication from the Royal Geographical Society and was, in consequence, able to make definite arrangements.

In a letter dated June 29 he told his father all that was transpiring:

"I wonder if you are feeling particularly rich

just at present. I believe I am to leave for 'furrin' parts about the beginning of September. Our new C.O. writes that he has been asked by the R.G.S. to let me go. I will if he can possibly spare me (being so valuable). The R.G.S. have written to me that 'I must certainly try to get to Riadh or El Kasim next winter as to do this would be a feat of the first geographical importance and the society will certainly reward me.' This is a reward in the money line, as I had probed them on the subject before. Now I wonder if you could let me have a cheque for a whole year's allowance, i.e., from next October's. If you could manage it I should be much obliged, but otherwise I shall have to borrow out here at an exorbitant rate. Don't pay it into Cox, will you? It is quite as safe a part which I intend to go to as the last. By the way they babbled a lot about a 'difficult and dangerous journey.' It was neither, provided that one did not look for trouble."

He made little of the difficulties and dangers of the proposed journey, but his people could have received little comfort from his assurance to the contrary, nor is the Royal Geographical Society an institution given to analysing a situation or an undertaking falsely. As has already been pointed out, Leachman always minimized the risk to which he was exposed yet inadvertently in his correspondence he wrote of the strain he had undergone. He had, however, given himself a self-imposed task and he was not to be daunted by any considerations or warnings of danger; nor, as the following extract of a letter written on August 24 shows, did he intend to be baulked even by the veto of the highest authority.

"I don't know what happened about my

leave, but I imagine Lord Crewe is at present contemplating it and intending to refuse me permission to travel. In which case I shall have to revert to subterfuge."

Apart from all other considerations the proposed journey must have been viewed with small favour by the Foreign Office. The strong objection which the Turks had to Leachman's activities and the steps they had taken to frustrate them would, of course, have been duly reported by our representative in Baghdad.

The political situation in the Middle East was at this time extremely complex and dangerous. Germany's policy envisaged the virtual control of Turkey in order to advance her ambitious plans with regard to the Baghdad Railway; and Great Britain, in order to relieve the tenseness of the situation, eventually acknowledged the whole area to be a German sphere of influence.

The Turks, therefore, acting in close liaison with their virtual allies, viewed any attempt on the part of Great Britain to watch what was going on, or to gain information of a military nature, or of a kind that would enable her to gauge the strength or weakness of the position, with disapproval and would certainly, had they known it, have raised a formal protest to Leachman undertaking an exploration, so inconvenient from their point of view. These facts made Leachman's undertakings all the more daring, for he had not only to face the dangers of the journey itself but to avoid the vigilance of the Turks and the unpleasant results which would undoubtedly have occurred if they had caught him.

A few days later he found his worst fears realized and he was furiously angry when informed of the official ban,

"I feel extremely like resigning my commission," he wrote on August 31, "or taking any other desperate steps. This foul Government have refused me permission to travel, though my application was most strongly supported by the C.-in-C. (Commander-in-Chief) and the Indian Government, who know more about these things than a lot of traitorous counterjumpers. So I have been put back a bit but I will do them in the eye yet. The worst of it is that all this time the best of the weather is being lost. It does make me sick."

It has been mentioned before that Leachman had a passionate love for his country. That is one of the reasons he would never demean himself in the opinion of the Arab by subterfuge concerning his religion or anything else. That was why he trounced the *saiyids* with his tongue when they considered that they had been insulted by drinking out of the same cup, and that was why he was so enraged against the authorities at home.

Leachman considered that his journey was in the best interests of the land he loved. He himself was willing to take all risks, brave any danger, suffer every hardship in her interests, and he could not understand how any of his own countrymen could stand in his way. It is as well to bear in mind these facts now and later on, for to appreciate them will be to understand his outlook and certain of his actions and the foolhardy courage he displayed. If ever a man kept untarnished the honour of his country it was Leachman. He considered himself, when entrusted with a task on her behalf, as the guardian of her repute and honour.

He was as good as his word. He did "do them in the eye," for, leave being due to him, without giving

anyone, officially, any indication as to how he intended to spend it, he made for Basra, as if to spend some of it there and in Baghdad.

His plans were already complete. He was in touch with Arab friends in Basra who were expecting him, and his finances were just sufficient for his needs, though only barely so, for, since he was going without official sanction, in fact in the face of an actual veto, monetary assistance from outside sources was denied him.

In the same manner in which he had previously visited Tibet Leachman's opening moves were innocent enough, and by November 11 he was in Basra, ostensibly on his way to Baghdad.

It is said that fortune favours the bold. It certainly did Leachman on this occasion, for his departure from India, his journey up the Gulf and his arrival and stay in Basra went quite unnoticed by the British officials.

In Basra he renewed his friendships with the various residents and was, as usual, lavishly entertained. To them he gave not the slightest indication that he had any other object than to enjoy himself. Then to their astonishment he suddenly disappeared.

He attended a party on November 13 which lasted until well into the night, said "Good night" in the usual manner and the following morning was nowhere to be found.

His great friend, Mr. C. F. McPherson, who was in Basra at the time, writing in the *Central Asian Journal* of 1921, gives the following account :

" In the same way that his appearances were sensational, so were his departures. He would dine with you and say ' Good night ' and that was the last that would be heard of him for perhaps months, when he would suddenly appear

again and take up the threads of civilization as if he had never been away. His absences were accountable for by his trips into the interior and journeying among the tribes. It was only with the greatest difficulty that he could be made to talk about himself and even if he did so the casual listener would probably not realize a fraction of the dangers and hardships that Leachman had gone through, so modestly did he relate his experiences. The Turks, not unnaturally, regarded him and his trips with the utmost suspicion and used all efforts to stop or hinder him and, as he could have expected little or no help from the British politicals should he have got himself into trouble with the Turks or tribes on his journeys, Leachman was indeed playing the 'lone hand' and carrying his life in his hands."

There is no actual record of the Turks watching his movements on this occasion, but it is highly probable that they did so. In any case he had acted on that assumption and with his usual artfulness. Had the Turks indeed been watching him on November 13, they would have seen him enjoying himself to the full until well after midnight when he went to bed apparently slightly intoxicated—an artifice often employed by him—and would have been satisfied that for that night at least their watch could be relaxed. But they would not have seen him leaving his quarters stealthily at 3 a.m. nor have recognized the lean Arab who left the palm groves bordering the Kuweit road an hour later. For this is what he actually did.

Everything seemed to favour him and he wrote two encouraging letters to his father, one on the 11th and one on the day of his actual departure. In the former he said :

"I have been extraordinarily lucky and my affairs are prospering. I leave, all being well, in two days' time with a great party of Arabs and shall be very safe so you need not be disturbed."

And on the day of his actual departure :

"I am leaving to-night and go down by desert to Kuweit, near which place I pick up a crowd of Arabs and go away down to a place not very far from Riadh in the centre of Arabia. I think I have a very good companion and I am going with a type of Arab well-known for their straightness and broad-mindedness so things should be all right. In case anything should happen of an unusual nature, I have left your address here with a man who will inform you."

Leachman was able to write more openly as the letter was posted on a British steamer and was, therefore, safe from interference. Even so, he was, as usual, extremely cautious and only gave his father such information as would relieve his mind from undue anxiety. For the same reason he made out that he was travelling with the most desirable of companions and in "a large party" so that his father might consider him well protected. Actually Leachman never travelled with a large party if he could avoid it, and if circumstances made this necessary for a time he sought the earliest opportunity for leaving it so that he might be more independent in his movements.

Thus far everything outwardly favoured him and there appeared to be little likelihood of hearing of him for several months. Yet three weeks to the day after his departure from Basra he wrote to his father to report the utter failure of his plans :

"I didn't expect to be writing to you again so

soon, but the fact is that I have made a miserable failure of my journey. I got away from Basra very easily. I went south for three days to a place where I expected to meet the men who were going to take me into Central Arabia. I found that through the absolute rottenness of the Arab who was my companion, they had left already. The consequence was that I had to go into Kuwait, and there I was hauled in front of the sheikh who was rather offensive and sent me back to Basra. By then I had spent all my money, so had to chuck it, as I could not afford to try again. I had a killing time of it and it is rather sickening to think it was all for nothing. I am now going back to India. I will come home next June, if possible for six weeks; I shall try again here next winter. There is, of course, the chance that they will chuck me out of the Army for coming here at all, or at any rate stop my leave for a year. It is very cold here; we are near Bushire. This I believe is the Christmas mail, so send all good wishes. I would have come straight home now, but for one thing I have no money and another I got my leave for this purpose. I think I ought to go back. I am afraid there will be trouble, however, as no Europeans are allowed at Kuwait, and although I concealed my identity as well as possible, I am afraid I am too well known in those parts for them not to find out who I am. I am not looking forward to a winter's soldiering much, knowing my luck is out but it can't be helped. Much love and all best wishes for Christmas."

The circumstances of this wretched failure were such as would daunt most men from repeating the

experiment, yet Leachman, although sadly disappointed, was not discouraged and his mind was already busy with thoughts of another attempt; meanwhile he was forced to return to his regiment and to answer for his disregard of the authorities. Happily for him the good work he had done in the past, his boldness in this abortive attempt, and his determination to succeed, brought their own reward and saved him from the consequences he feared.

So once more for a short while Leachman settled down as an ordinary regimental officer and as such had to sit for his promotion examination in the beginning of March, 1912. As he had little time to study for it he looked forward to it with foreboding of failure, only to find that the papers, being of a practical nature, were not as difficult as he had expected. Indeed he passed the test with ease, and he also received news which to some extent compensated him for his recent unlucky adventure—his colonel agreed to his going home on leave at the end of April.

CHAPTER XV

DEDICATED TO A GREAT TASK

APRIL—DECEMBER 1912

DURING his leave in England which he spent with full enjoyment and with his usual energy, Leachman did not for a moment lose sight of his main objective, which was to carry out the journey from which he had so recently been baulked. With dogged persistence he pressed the desirability of this exploration upon all those who might in any way assist him. Thanks to the strong recommendations of the military authorities in India, but above all to the generosity and support accorded him by the Royal Geographical Society, his hopes were realized and the means and necessary leave were granted him to put his plans into execution. He had then to consider his "port of entry" into the country and finally decided that he would start from Damascus.

Apart from the question of the extra expense and loss of time which a journey to Basra and Baghdad would involve, he hoped that a less strict watch would be kept on him at the Syrian capital than would have been the case at the two former places. He knew Damascus and its district fairly well. He had already successfully carried out an exploration from this city when he made his famous ride to Baghdad in 1910. From every point of view, then, Damascus was to be preferred to any place on the eastern side where he was already so well known.

He left England on October 17 and reached

Brindisi on October 19. His impressions of this famous port were by no means favourable. "This is a seaport," he wrote, "and nothing else, in spite of the fact that Virgil died here. I don't wonder." And he found the place hot, dusty and dirty.

By October 25 Leachman was in Damascus, after a journey of comparative comfort yet in which he found ground for complaint, for though he endured all the hazards and discomforts of exploration into the unknown with fortitude and even complaisance, the petty worries of civilized travel irked him extremely.

Leachman had already accomplished much. He had traversed an east to west section of the Ottoman Empire, learning much of the places lying on either side of his route. He had circled Armenia and Kurdistan and the north-west corner of Persia. He had crossed the desert from Damascus to Baghdad and had journeyed six hundred miles to the south of Karbela. He now proposed to strike deep into the heart of Arabia. In order to accomplish these journeys he had worked to a definite plan so as to minimize the risk of failure, and he had even been prepared to sacrifice his career as a soldier in order to fulfil his self-imposed task. It will already be obvious to the reader that Leachman must have had some deep underlying motive for so systematic and so resolute a preparation. He was in his quiet and unassuming way as great an imperialist as Cecil Rhodes or Joseph Chamberlain. He lacked the means and opportunities, perhaps the genius, which these giants possessed, but like them he had the vision to pierce the mists shrouding the minds of lesser men and to visualize the greatness of his country's mission. Moreover, he possessed the fanaticism of the missionary, which caused him to imperil his life over and over again rather than

surrender, indomitable courage to overcome obstacles, and a devotion to his country which made his end, as will be seen, worthy of her greatness. This was the secret of Leachman's life and the foundation of all his achievements.

In South Africa it will be recalled how the young man of twenty-one prayed that England would not grant a peace till no man either of the present or of future generations could doubt her victory. Now in the same spirit his indignation unjustly caused him to term "traitors" those who would have thwarted him in his mission to Arabia. That outburst revealed the passion of his heart ; it was not due to his having been denied a trip on which his heart was set, but because he thought the veto was a betrayal of his country's interests and a concession to her enemies.

Leachman was a keen soldier. He realized, as did many others, that the situation in the Middle East, viewed particularly in relation to our Indian Empire, was such that few could regard it with equanimity. It was plain to many that the next European war, which was obviously impending, and had only been averted in 1911 by the narrowest of margins, would certainly vitally affect our interest in Arabia or Persia, if not in both these regions. Turkey was the friend of Germany and German ambitions envisaged the extension of her influence to the Persian Gulf. The deductions were obvious, and Leachman quickly realized the potentialities of the situation. He, therefore, deliberately set himself to undermine the influence of Turkey and Germany among the Arab peoples, and he became a perpetual thorn in the sides of both.

His task, indeed, was a formidable one. The privileged position Germany had acquired in the Turkish Empire enabled her agents as well as those

of Austria to flood the countries comprising the Ottoman domain. Lavishly supplied with money, these had for years been obtaining information about Arabia and seeking to influence its chieftains to combine with Turkey. The German agents were well chosen and they served their Fatherland with marked ability and courage. Leachman entered the lists as a single and poorly armed champion, yet as regards Arabia proper and the rural Arab population of Mesopotamia he smashed to pieces the German and Turkish organization, so that their chief agent acknowledged the fact that all their work had been brought to nought through the influence acquired by this solitary and audacious Englishman. Leachman, hating the townsmen, visualized the finding of an increased extension of British influence through the medium of the Bedouin chiefs and their followers, but that was as far as he could see at this stage of his Arabian career. How this ideal was modified and with what results will appear later. Meantime he was perfecting himself as an instrument to be used when the right moment arrived.

By November 2 his arrangements for his journey were complete, and on that date he wrote a last letter before his actual departure the following day :

“ I am off on my travels to-morrow. I was having great difficulty in finding anyone to go with, but to my delight an Arab walked into the hotel one morning, whom I know well. He had only arrived from Baghdad the previous day. He was agreeable to go with me anywhere. I have one other man, and have bought three camels. I go to a village called Dumair, twenty miles from here on the edge of the desert. I leave on camels from there and for the first four days in the direction of Baghdad and then to the south. I shall be less anxious when I get well

down south, as one stands a very even chance of being looted in the northern part. Things are in a bad way here ; no news at all of the severe Turkish defeats is out here, but I heard the first news to-night privately. I think that the Christians in these parts are in none too safe a position. I have an idea that my letters are being stopped, as I have had hardly any up to date and only one from home. I have told them here to keep my letters till I send for them or get turned back to Damascus. Unless anything unforeseen happens, I doubt if I shall be near enough to Basra or Kuweit to get a letter there, but I will try my best, but you should hardly expect it. If all goes well I should be ' off ' Basra or Kuweit in about three weeks' time, so if you don't hear in two months' time, you will know that I have probably got further into Central Arabia. It has been raining here like anything and the roads are in an awful state. I hope it will get better soon as it is most unpleasant travelling on a camel in the rain, he slides all over the place.

" P.S. This will not go till I have left Damascus."

The postscript shows how cautious he was lest his departure and destination should become known prematurely to the Turks. As Leachman has himself written a brief account of this remarkable journey we cannot do better than give the story in his actual words. The account which follows in the next chapter was published by the Royal Geographical Society in its *Journal* of May 1914, and is reproduced here by the courtesy of the Society. Only such portions of Leachman's account which deal purely with geographical details and geological data have been omitted as having small interest for the average reader, otherwise the account is exactly as published.

CHAPTER XVI

“A JOURNEY THROUGH CENTRAL ARABIA,” BY
CAPTAIN G. LEACHMAN, THE ROYAL SUSSEX REGT.

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1912

“THE journey described in this paper was undertaken in the latter months of 1912, my object being, if possible, to travel from Damascus in a south-easterly direction to the walls of Leina, touched by me in a former expedition, and thence to strike south to Kasim; and then in due course I hoped to reach the southern capital of Central Arabia, Riadh. From that place I hoped to penetrate into the totally unexplored country of the great desert of the Ruba-el-Khali to the south, but this eventually proved to be impossible.

“I left Damascus in the beginning of November by the route followed till a month previously by camel post, which used to cross the five hundred odd miles of desert between Damascus and Baghdad in nine days, but had been discontinued. Travellers who have performed this journey with the post will remember what a nightmare ride it was. The route had been abandoned owing to frequent raids by Bedouin, and the consequent loss of the post, and the bags were despatched by a longer but safer road through Aleppo. I had with me a party of twenty ‘Ageyl’ returning to their homes in Kasim.

“There is much difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word ‘Ageyl,’ some older writer believing it to be a tribe in Central Arabia. It appears to be used to describe those Arabs of Kasim

who are engaged in the trade in camels, horses, and merchandise between Kuwait, Baghdad, Damascus, and Egypt. Whatever the actual name implies, it is a fact that the 'Ageyl' can pass through the whole of Northern Arabia with nothing to fear from raiding parties of Bedouin. I was soon to have proof of this.

"After leaving behind us Dumair, the most easterly village of the Damascus plain, the route lies over flat gravelly plains occasionally broken by a long swelling ridge. Bitter cold was experienced in these plains in the winter, and the *jirbas* or waterskins were frequently frozen hard in the morning—so much so that we had to thaw them by the fire before loading, or otherwise they would rub sores in the camels' sides. On the second night out from Dumair, we were making our way through the darkness, half asleep, when without any apparent cause our camels sheered off to one side. They had discovered another party approaching. Someone on our side raised a cry of *Silahkum, Silahkum* (to your arms). This seemed hardly wise, as we had only three rifles among us, and the other side, who were not more than a hundred yards off, heard the cry and promptly responded by firing into the black mass of camels. Thereupon our cry was changed to 'Ageyl,' and the firing ceased at once. The other party approached and proved to be a *ghrazzu* or raiding party of the Bedouin tribe of Walid Ali returning from an unsuccessful expedition. *Ghrazzu* are particularly active in winter, as at that time they can usually find water lying in unfrequented spots from recent rain, and they are not obliged to visit known watering places, always a source of danger to them. The Walid Ali are a section of the Roalla, a branch of the very large clan of the Anaiza. The Roalla occupy the eastern part of Syrian desert, which they cross to make raids on the

other branch of the Anaiza, the Amarat, with whom they are at enmity. These small *ghrazzus*, seldom exceeding a dozen men in number, travel long distances in their expeditions. On the following day we encountered another party of Walid Ali, which had been on a foray into the neighbourhood of Deir-er-Zor, three hundred miles from their own *dirat* or country. They were bringing with them many looted camels.

"As we journeyed further into the centre of the Syrian desert, the country became more and more barren, and where the track crossed the northern corner of the Hamad, there is scarcely a vestige of herbage for the greater part of the year, the plain being covered with black basaltic flints, most trying going for the feet of the camels. In spring, however, as is the whole desert, it is covered with grass a foot high. On the fifth day from Damascus, in a country broken by a succession of wadis running north-east, my own party left the 'Ageyl,' who were continuing on their way to Baghdad. They do not care to bring the profits of their camel-selling across this desert on their person, so they take drafts from Damascus on Arabs in Baghdad, from which place they travel by steamer to Basra or Kuweit and thence accompany caravans to Kasim. From this point on the Damascus-Baghdad route commenced our actual journey of penetration into Central Arabia.

"My party now consisted of a companion of former travels named Saleh, an 'Ageyl,' and two youths from Kasim, making four in all. As we were to pass through the country of the Anaiza and the Shammar tribes of Bedouin, we had with us a man from each of these tribes, who would pass us through without any danger from raiding parties. In Arabia such very necessary companions for the road are called *rafik*.

" Our point of departure from the great Damascus-Baghdad route was close to the wells of Ghara, or, as they are sometimes called, Meluse, or Bir Meluse on most maps.

" At the wells of el Mat, the water was at a level of thirty feet down. Here were some 'Sulaib,' or 'Slaib,' the gypsies of the desert, busily watering, preparatory to moving their camp. They had received tidings by some mysterious agency that a camp of Bedouin was moving to these same wells, and the Sulaib have a dislike to the propinquity of Bedu, who seize their flocks and donkeys.

" There is no certain knowledge of the origin of these people, though various theories have been put forward, one of which is that they are descendants of the Crusaders, 'salib' meaning a cross. The Sulaib themselves are quite ignorant of their origin, but the Bedu are fond of saying they are related to the 'Anglez.' They are found all over the northern Arabian desert, on the slopes between the Persian Gulf and Nejd, and also to the west of Nejd. They do not appear to visit the southern deserts. Their camps consist usually of about twenty tents of a smaller size than those of Bedouin tribes, and they are generally pitched at a distance from some watering place only known to the Sulaib. They own few camels and move their belongings and themselves on donkeys, which apparently endure thirst in much the same way as a camel. They possess goats and sheep, and, though having an appearance of poverty, probably assumed in order not to excite the cupidity of the Bedouins, they generally have plenty to eat. The Bedouin do not usually make raids on them, but will extract large hospitality from them. The Sulaib show a wonderful similarity of feature, while they speak with a high-pitched voice, and usually all at once; their

women are spoken of among Bedouin for their beauty, and have not too good reputations. The men usually wear a smock-like garment made of gazelle skins with a hood to cover the head. In this they are said to be able to approach within a few yards of a herd of gazelle, and they seldom fail in a stalk; as their weapons are very ancient muzzle-loaders often six feet long, the hunter would have little chance at any distance. I have seen the trail in the sand where a hunter has crawled for nearly a mile in his approach to a herd.

"Leaving the well of el Mat, and taking a more southerly course, we were able to avoid the very broken ground caused by the wadis forming the district known to the Arabs as el Wadian.

"El Wadian had lately been traversed by the Austrian traveller, Dr. Musil, who threaded through this mass of wadis, which even the Bedouin have some difficulty in naming. After six waterless days we reached some wells in a wadi known as Aghrar or Arar, and here were a large camp of Sulaib, one of whom had been Dr. Musil's companion for a time, and apparently a not too reliable one. Their sheikh was apparently well known as a poet, and would compose verses extolling the perfections of anyone from whom he might expect a reward. At night after I had lain down I heard him tell Salch, my companion, that he had just composed a poem about me, and he was wondering how much I should give him. The poem was duly recited to me in a very cold and cheerless dawn, and I am afraid his reward did not come up to his expectations. Hereabouts I had crossed the route of Captains Aylmer and Butler, who came down from Hit to Jauf in 1909. From this point east to the wells of Hazil, no European traveller is known to have passed; the nature of the ground changes, the gravelly surface giving place to

tracts of disintegrated limestone with many inequalities and low hills. Numbers of birds and animals were to be seen, partridge, quail, hares, *houbara*, or the great bustard, and great herds of gazelle. There were also an extraordinary quantity and variety of snakes, all called poisonous by the Arabs, as to them no snake is harmless. Four days' marching in a south-easterly direction brought us to the wells of Hazil. About a dozen miles before reaching these wells we entered what my Arabs called Wadi el Khar, here almost imperceptible as a wadi, and having a width of about four miles.

"Considering the question as to whether the Wadi el Khar forms a route between the great central oasis of Jauf and Najaf on the Euphrates. It appears that at present there is no definite caravan route, used as such, between Jauf and Najaf, as the only people travelling between the two places would seem to be single camel-riders, or 'Ageyl.'

"Such travellers would do the three hundred miles between the two places in five or six days, and in summer would probably halt at the wells of Arar, and then ride straight on to Najaf, while in winter it is probable they would not water at all until they reached the Euphrates.

"I learned that Jauf, the principal oasis in northern Arabia, had now fallen into the hands of Sheikh Ibn-Sheilan of the Roalla branch of the Anaiza, the large Bedouin tribe who roam over the country north-west of Jauf up to the confines of Damascus, and even up to the Euphrates.

"They are now enemies of the Amarat, the other great branch of the Anaiza, who cover the country to the north-east up to the Euphrates in that direction.

"The majority of desert wells visited in this part of northern Arabia are very narrow at the surface

and seldom more than three feet across, while below they widen out. Alongside the mouth is a small trough, into which the water is poured as it is brought to the surface. Here the camel drinks, in itself a somewhat remarkable sight, as, however thirsty he may be, it is done in the most leisurely fashion, and he appears to taste the full joy of a long drink in the manner of a gourmet born. He first wets his lips and again raising his head proceeds to shake it and look about him. After a pause he drinks a little more, and the same process is repeated, and thus each drop of the precious liquid is absorbed with appropriate relish. In the winter a camel will last seven days without water and without great discomfort, while in spring, when the green grass appears, he will drink but rarely, and remains often a couple of months waterless. As for feeding, an hour or so a day of very sparse grazing will suffice the camel on a short journey. The 'Agcyl' usually carry a mixture of millet and coarse flour called *alej*, which they make up every night into smallish balls, the size of a man's fist, and give five or six to their camels. In southern Nejd the Arabs make up dates into balls, stones and all, which is reputed to be beneficial as medicine.

"The Bedouin is extraordinarily kind to his camels, and in return the Arabian camel is a very different animal to the ill-mannered, treacherous variety encountered in India. The Arabian camel never bites or kicks, and except for his inevitable groans of complaint, when mounted, shows no signs of unwillingness. His powers of endurance are extraordinary, and some of the stories of great journeys done by camels are almost beyond belief. The camel rider whose duty it was to carry the post from Damascus to Baghdad generally covered an average of sixty miles a day for nine days, which

makes a fine performance. The story is often told of the rider who, riding with urgent news to one of the Ibn er Rashid chiefs at that time in Riadh, covered the six hundred miles between Najaf and Riadh in six days, the camel dying as it came in. Burkhardt has a story of a camel who covered a hundred and fifteen miles in eleven hours.

"I crossed the Baghdad-Mecca pilgrim route known as the Darb Zobeida, which was the road by which the Blunts in 1879 and Huber in 1881 travelled down from Hail to Baghdad, then, leaving the Nefud on the fourth day from Hazil, we dropped into the depression in which are situated the wells of Leina. These famous wells were touched by me in my journey of 1910, at which time, owing to winter rains, the whole of the valley was covered in grass a foot high, with thousands of Bedouin tents dotted about the neighbourhood. Now not a blade of grass or desert bush was visible. The water in these wells appears to be very constant, as I found it now at the same level as on my previous visit, though with a slightly brackish taste. Moreover, the Arabs have a saying which runs, *Leina, leina, mithal ajine, gada b'il leina, asha b'il Basra*, meaning that the water of Leina has the same effect as a certain form of excellent bread, and so refreshes the traveller that one who breaks his fast in Leina will go so fast that he will dine in Basra two hundred and fifty miles away. Leaving Leina we at once entered the Dahana, the name given to the strip of sand which breaks off from the Nefud here. In this part of the Dahana we came upon an encampment of Sinjar Arabs, who are a section of the Shammar stock; and much questioning ensued as to the whereabouts of various tribes of Arabs, the fall of rain in the country, the existence and whereabouts of raiding parties, and other usual matters of interest to the Bedu.

As I did not wish to visit my former host, the Shammar chieftain, Ibn er Rashid, whose capital is Hail, and who had prevented me travelling thither before, I thought it inadvisable to say I was an Englishman, but found it quite easy to pass myself off as a Musulawi, or an inhabitant of Mosul in north Mesopotamia; the fact that my Arabic was indifferent did not appear to be considered curious or raise any suspicions in the minds of these people. I have found the same thing in some of the Central Arabian towns, where I have thought it better to conceal my identity, and I found my only difficulty was confined to my not knowing the current prices of camels, foodstuffs, etc., in Baghdad or Damascus, which is a question invariably asked by an Arab of a newcomer who claims to be a native of those places.

"After leaving the Dahana, we crossed a district known as Taisiat. Most of the district is formed of calcareous rocks similar to the Hejera, and across this runs a line of mounds of stone which ultimately reach the wells of Zubire and are called by the Arabs 'a road.' The origin of these mounds is difficult to comprehend, unless some public-spirited person in olden times endeavoured to form a track of loose stones. The Arabs say it must be the work of Zobeida, Haroun er Rashid's queen, the great benefactor of this part of the world.

"On leaving Zubire we entered a strip of sand known as the Ard-el-Madhua, which certainly appeared to me to present greater difficulties to travel than I had met with previously.

"From here a day's march over a gravelly plain brought the party to Kasim, and on the twenty-eighth day from Damascus at nightfall we reached the outskirts of Kusiba, the border town between the territory of Ibn er Rashid, the Shammar Emir, and El Kasim

“ Before describing my further journey in Central Arabia, it seems advisable to give some account of the governing power and very tangled politics of this part of the country. It must first be stated that all the inhabited portion of Central Arabia is known as Nejd, and this is divided into two great divisions with an ever-changing boundary. The northern division of the Shammar Emirate or kingdom is in the hands of the family of Ibn er Rashid, a member of which in former days acted as governor of these districts, and was a dependant of the southern kingdom of Ibn Sa’ud ; one of these governors broke away from his overlord, gathered together the northern Bedouin tribes, including the Shammar and Harb, and formed this great northern power with its capital at Hail. The southern division or Wahabi kingdom, in the hands of the family of Ibn Sa’ud, has its seat at Riadh, and the two powers are at almost perpetual warfare. The bone of contention is usually the district known as El Kasim lying midway between the two capitals. Here are the two great independent towns of Anaiza and Boreida, with many rich villages in the neighbourhood ; the district contains a travelled, intelligent and war-like people, who attach themselves to one side or the other, and usually bring victory to the power with which they side. The Turks themselves have laid claim to Kasim, and though defeated on two occasions in 1904 by the Kasimis, nominally occupied Kasim for a couple of years before their soldiery were withdrawn or deserted. On their evacuation in 1906, Kasim became a dependency of Ibn Sa’ud, and remains so at the present time. Just now Ibn er Rashid and Ibn Sa’ud are at peace, though how long this state of things will continue is doubtful.

“ The border-line between the Shammar kingdom and Kasim runs north of the towns of Kusaiba and

Kuwara. These two towns change hands constantly according as Ibn Sa'ud or Ibn er Rashid are in the ascendancy. Kusaiba is a straggling town made up of several separate quarters, each containing a number of houses, the whole stretching for a mile along the foot of a precipitous sandstone cliff three hundred feet in height. On the top of the cliff are watch towers, characteristic of all Nejdi towns, in each of which in time of warfare is stationed a watchman supplied by public contribution to give notice of the approach of the enemy. Water is to be found within a foot or two of the surface near the town, and its abundance causes large numbers of mosquitoes. Even in winter the air in the town is sultry, and in summer the heat must be intense, owing to its rather confined situation at the foot of the high cliff. The people have an extremely sallow, unhealthy appearance, and a languid temperament.

"Our party had now crossed the eight hundred miles of desert from Damascus to Kasim without mishap, in spite of the evil forebodings of 'Ageyl' and others upon our setting out; and we thought we might reasonably expect henceforward to journey in security in these more settled districts. It was rather a shock, therefore, to hear that all roads through Kasim, and especially those from Kusaiba to Boreida, were unsafe for travellers, owing to recent raids by Ataiba Bedouin, who only a week before had held up and robbed the headman of Kusaiba himself. No Ataiba *rafik* or travelling companion was to be had, so we decided to leave without one, and mounting the high cliff at the back of the town before sunset, we remained with our camels concealed in a hollow till dark to avoid any Bedouin look-out party who might be on the watch for travellers starting from the town. We escaped observation, and as soon as night had fallen we

pushed rapidly across the stony desert, and a couple of hours before dawn slept beside our camels on the outskirts of Ayun. This is a town of four thousand inhabitants, also known as Ayun el Kasim to distinguish it from Ayun es Sirr farther to the south, and forms a stage on the main road from Hail to Boreida. The emir or governor of the town was a brother of my companion Saleh, who had left his native place many years before as a boy. Riding into the town in the dawn, Saleh was recognized by a few of his townsmen, and the news of his arrival soon brought relations of all sorts, sizes, and sexes flocking round him, after which we were led in triumph to the emir's house. Saleh whispered in his brother's ear that I was an Englishman, and received in turn strict injunctions from him to say that I was to pass myself as a Musulawi, or inhabitant of Mosul in Mesopotamia ; I did so, and then I was received everywhere with extraordinary courtesy and kindness as the companion of the governor's brother. The round of every 'kahwa' or private coffee house had to be made, and a hundred times the same questions were asked about our journey and tidings of natives of Ayun who might be in Baghdad or Damascus. It seemed that Saleh had seen every one of them a few days before leaving, and each one asked to be remembered to the questioner. A feast was given in our honour, in the course of which a lump of exceptionally tough meat went the wrong way, and I was seized with a violent fit of choking ; on which the assembled diners, to the number of fifty or so, at once began to tell each other how difficult it must be for a civilized person like myself to fall in with their savage ways, seeing that we in our cultured manner fed ourselves with a spoon, while now I had to eat with my hands.

"Ayun is without walls, which is rather the

exception in Central Arabia, and specially remarkable in a border town. It lies in a sandy basin with low sandstone hills round three sides of it, while its mud-built houses are ensconced among the date gardens and cultivation, not at some distance from them as is usually the case. The inhabitants appear most broad-minded, business-like, and travelled, and the community is a very happy one. Few old men are to be seen, a result of the immense losses suffered by this border town in the perpetual struggle between the families of Sa'ud and Rashid. This is similar to other central Arabian towns; Ayun is governed by an emir, appointed by Ibn Sa'ud from the leading family of the place, in which the office is hereditary. His business is to keep order, collect taxes, and muster levies to serve under the banner of Ibn Sa'ud in case of necessity. In return for this he receives a certain amount of pay and a great deal of dignity.

"I had intended to continue my march to the south along the western road through Rass and by the west to Kasim through districts which for the most part have not been seen by a European; but at Ayun I heard that Ibn Sa'ud, the great emir himself, had come up to Boreida on a visit. I explained to the governor of Ayun the route I wished to take, and I also mentioned that, much as I wished to visit Ibn Sa'ud in his capital, Riadh, the last thing I wanted was to meet him in Boreida, from which place he could easily insist on my retracing my steps towards Kuweit. The governor showed me how difficult it was for him to permit me to travel by the western route, which would avoid Boreida and a meeting with Ibn Sa'ud, stating that if he did so he would incur the displeasure of his master, and it might cost him his post. Therefore with gloomy forebodings, Saleh and myself decided to set out for

Boreida, twenty-eight miles south of Ayun. We passed on the way a few villages and date plantations showing a varying degree of fertility ; but it is clear there must have been great changes since Palgrave's time, who travelled through here in disguise in 1862, and states he saw to the utmost horizon an immense plain studded with towns and villages, towers and groves, announcing everywhere life, opulence, and activity. On nearing Boreida, we crossed a desert of white sand-dunes, and at last at evening the walled town itself appeared suddenly, as if dropped from the clouds into this sandy waste. Coming from the north and east no date gardens are visible to the traveller, but only a solid block of square houses surrounded by a high wall becomes apparent. A great wooden door stood open in a lofty gateway in the wall ; we entered and crossed a wide open space, at the north-east end of which was a stronghold of Ibn Sa'ud, where he is said to keep an armed force, to cope with a rising of the turbulent tribesmen in the neighbourhood. We couched our camels at the doorway of the house of the emir, Ibn Ma'amr, a man of Riadh put in as governor by Ibn Sa'ud. A number of armed negro slaves from the castle soon gathered round, and from them I found, much to my relief, that Ibn Sa'ud had left that morning on his return to Riadh. A certain excitement was caused among the bystanders by my statement that I was an Englishman on business intent with Ibn Sa'ud, but the emir sent no word, and apparently could not make up his mind to receive me. However, within a few minutes of my arrival a messenger on a fast camel was speeding south in pursuit of Ibn Sa'ud with tidings of my appearance. For an hour or more we remained sitting in the open courtyard by our camels, subject to the attentions of the loafers of Boreida, till at last we were shown to a

very dirty house, and left in peace, but dinnerless. At night I was led to the presence of the emir, who, though somewhat offended at my refusal to tell him what was my business with Ibn Sa'ud—although I should have been puzzled to tell him this, as in truth I had none—yet consented to listen to my suggestion that in all probability Ibn Sa'ud would not be quite pleased with the nature of my reception at Boreida. After this we became quite friendly, but I discovered that he was really a weak personage, under the thumb of his negro slaves, without any direct feeling against me, and soon after I took the opportunity to withdraw.

“Boreida is the rival of Anaiza in Kasim, and the fourth largest town in Nejd, and has a population of about ten thousand people. A ridge of white sand two hundred feet high, driven by the wind into curious shapes, protects the town on the west, while intervening between it and the houses of the town is a long strip of dense date gardens and cultivation. The inhabitants of Boreida as well as those of Anaiza are remarkable for their business proclivities, and much trade is carried on with the coast towns of the Persian Gulf and with surrounding Bedouin tribes, while there is a large bazaar in the place itself. In spite of this, Palgrave, Huber, and Doughty, all of whom visited the place, testify to the bigoted and fanatical nature of the townsmen, while the last-named narrowly escaped with his life. Even at the present time, although communication with the Persian Gulf and Irak has increased and the state of the country is peaceful, it is one of the few towns in Nejd in which I met with any discourtesy.

“The messenger despatched by the governor to Ibn Sa'ud returned with instructions from the emir that I was to be sent after him to Riadh, and I also found on my way that Ibn Sa'ud had most kindly

issued orders for my comfort at every town on the road, which greatly smoothed matters. I therefore had a chance of travelling from Boreida by the direct route to Riadh through Shakra in Woshm, which has been traversed once only by Captain Sadler, an officer from India, nearly a hundred years ago. We set out with one *rafik*, or travelling companion, from the Ataiba tribe of Bedouins, who, though quite a young man, appeared to have visited most parts of Arabia as a member of raiding parties at one time or another.

“On leaving the village of Aufizia we reached the boundary of Kasim, and thenceforward had entered into southern Nejd, or the Wahabi kingdom proper. The name of the district was el Mudhnib, and the town of that name, thirty-five miles south-east of Boreida, lies at the foot of a projecting bluff of the eastern cliff. It has a population of about two thousand, who must be fully occupied in tending the very extensive date gardens and cultivation which stretch for more than a mile on three sides of the town. The water which flows down the slope from the west and is held up by the cliff which overshadows the town on the east is for the most part brackish and undrinkable by human beings. We knew there must be some well of sweet water near the town, but none of the passers-by would tell us where it was, or in fact give us any answer at all. Following the usual custom, they were afraid that if they entered into conversation with us they might have to entertain us for the night. The hospitality of the townsman is a poor thing compared with that of the Bedu of the desert. Yet the entire population of Nejd derive their origin from various great Bedouin stocks, especially from different sections of the Anaiza, and should understand the laws of hospitality. A great part of this settled population

are descended from the ancient tribe the Beni Tamim, who, I believe, are now no more seen as Bedouin, but have become entirely sedentary.

“ Leaving Mudhnib we traversed a loamy plain, still having the sandy cliffs on the east side, and we chanced, during the night, to pass the village of Murabba. A watchman on the walls, hearing conversation, bade us halt, to which we answered that we proposed proceeding. By this time several other voices were heard on the wall, and fresh orders were shouted at us to halt or be fired at. We shouted in reply that we were on our way to visit Ibn Sa’ud, but the villagers implied that they had heard the story before, and as we were probably robbers we had better halt. We accordingly thought it best to halt, and off-loaded our camels where we were—it happened to be an unsavoury spot beneath the village wall—and lit a fire. Presently some of the inhabitants came round expecting us to prepare the customary coffee. We were not, however, feeling sociable, and besides, if I was obliged to stay there, I thought I might as well get some sleep. Our visitors therefore melted away, all became quiet within the walls, and an hour or so before dawn we started afresh on our way towards Riadh.

“ Various *kasrs* or fortified châteaux are dotted about at distances of several miles from each other. High walls surround these *kasrs*, and inside them are the dwellings of the owner of the land in the vicinity and his dependants and slaves, often to the number of sixty or seventy. Absolute equality seems to obtain between master and servant as regards conversation, and they appear a very happy community.

“ My party spent a night in the *kasr* of one of the Nasir of the despised Heteymi stock, but one who was renowned far and wide for his hospitality. He turned out a bigoted old gentleman, and talked for

hours on the subject of religion, insisting on my repeating the *Kalamat* from the Koran. 'There is no God but one God, and Muhammad is His prophet,' and he was much annoyed that I always stopped at the end of the first half of the creed. I took from him a negro slave he provided me as a servant, after paying off his debts to Nasir, but when we arrived in Riadh he strangely disappeared, a sign that negroes even when long settled in Arabia do not assume easily the strictness of the poorest Bedouin as regards money matters.

"From Ayun we turned east and crossed a sandy strip, here fifteen miles wide, emerging into stony plains with patches of black basaltic rock.

"Our road lay over a marked ridge with square-topped sandstone hills along it, and enters the sandy plain in which is situated Shakra, the capital of this district of Woshm.

"Shakra, the capital of Woshm, has a population of about 5,000 souls. It lies at the east end of a long sandy slope, and its date plantations and gardens stretch for about a mile. Our road approached the town from the north, passing through an outer wall (in many places in ruins), and then running along a causeway raised twenty feet above the surrounding gardens. This causeway is caused by the sand driven through the opening made in the wall for the road. We made our way along the causeway and through a second and newer wall, and found ourselves in a town which had an air of cleanliness and general prosperity unequalled in southern Nejd. The Emir, Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, a young man of great charm of manner and very broad-minded views, received me at his *kasr*, in spite of the protests of his chief *mullah*, who would have had me camp outside the town. The conversation was of an astonishingly wide range, and topics of European

interest, such as aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy, were freely discussed. In Shakra a certain amount of Indian influence becomes apparent, and the Indian currency and weights are used for reckoning. In former years the town supplied the majority of horses to the Indian market, but few now remain after the long period of warfare, and this year but five were despatched to the coast.

"Leaving Shakra, the road runs easterly along the southern side of a sandy strip and passes the town of Tharmida, still showing signs of the punishment meted out to it by Ibn Sa'ud for taking sides against him in his struggle against his rival, Rashid.

"As we left the Nefud, the road descends a long gravel slope past the village of El Burra and at last touches Jebel Toweik, towards which it has been gradually converging.

"Our route was here joined by the pilgrim road from Mecca to Riyadh, and we entered a gorge in Jebel Toweik which was filled with *sidr* and *talh* trees. After ascending this for ten miles we reached the watershed and entered the head of Wadi Hanifa, here known as the Wadi Haisiat.

"Eastward of this the valley slopes gently down again, having a width of eight hundred yards, the sides becoming gradually lower as we proceed. The road from Zilfri and Sedus joins in on the north. The bed of the wadi now becomes clearly marked, and at Ayane, a few miles farther on, we found the remains of stone revetments of massive size, built to control the rush of water down the valley which occurs after the rain. The ruins of old Dereiya appear on the right bank of the wadi, while the new village is on the left. This town, the ancient capital of southern Nejd, was taken by the Egyptians, the majority of the inhabitants were then slaughtered. The extensive ruins show something



THE WALLS OF RIADH AND THE HASSA GATE
[See Page 247]
(Photographed by Leachman)

of its former size, which must have been very much greater than that of Riadh, the capital of the present day. Climbing out of the wadi, which was left to the south, and crossing a stony plateau twenty miles in breadth, the town of Riadh, the great capital of Nejd, suddenly springs into view, having previously been hidden in a dip in the ground.

" This town, which became the capital of southern Nejd and the seat of the Wahabi kingdom after the destruction of Dereiya by the Egyptians in 1818, lies in a depression one hundred feet below the surrounding plain, and, together with its suburbs and date gardens, stretches for two miles north and south, while its southern extremity touches the Wadi Hanifa, here known as el Batin. The town, which is completely embedded on three sides in dense date gardens, is also surrounded by a massive wall of recent construction with towers every few hundred yards, some of them commanding the various gates of entry. On the north-west is situated an extensive cemetery traversed by the great roads leading to Mecca and to Hasa.

" Across the open plain Saleh and myself wended our way, both of us in some doubt as to what the nature of our reception would be in this stronghold of Wahabism, recounted to us as the most fanatical sect of Islam in the world. Entering the town by a high gateway having iron-studded wooden doors, we passed through a number of quiet by-streets and then suddenly emerged into a broad square with a bazaar, in which business was at its height at this the noon-tide hour of the day ; as we passed through many curious eyes were fixed on us, and then we came to a large open space flanked on the right by a lofty castle, which proved to be the palace of Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the Wahabi Emir of Nejd. We couched our camels and took our places on a mud bench

running along the walls while crowds of townsmen and slaves gathered round us, seeking tidings of the returning Meccan Haj, due in a few days, of which they thought we were the advance party. Many came and shook us by the hand as we waited ; but finally the emir's chamberlain arrived, and driving the crowd away, led us into the palace, with a number of polite inquiries as to our health and the nature of journey. The first formality was to drink coffee in the public coffee chamber, through which passed a continual coming and going of palace attendants and slaves, all resplendent in embroidered cloaks and silver-handled swords. Very soon we were escorted to an upper hall overlooking the bazaar and the town, and here we were greeted by Abdul Aziz, the Wahabi Emir himself.

" He is a man of about forty, six feet high and broad in proportion, with a strong though kindly face and the simplest of manners. He shook me by the hand and put me at my ease at once by the friendliness of his greeting, and a long conversation ensued on the news of the outside world, especially the Turko-Balkan war. Abdul Aziz regretted that his palace could not offer better quarters or more luxury, but said that since his arrival in Riyadh ten years before, he had been incessantly moving about in desert parts of his territory warring on his enemies and endeavouring to consolidate the multitude of tribes under his control, and so had had no leisure to add to or improve his palace.

" He gave me the history of his rise to power. It seems that some years ago during the reign of Muhammad Ibn er Rashid, the ruler of Hail, the most powerful of Shammar emirs, practically the whole of southern Nejd was wrested from Ibn Sa'ud's hands, and Abd ur Rahman Ibn Sa'ud, father of the present Emir, took refuge in Kuweit under the ægis of

Mubarak, the sheikh of that place. In 1902, Muhammad Ibn er Rashid having died, the Shammar power grew weaker, and Abdul Aziz left Kuwait with a following of only forty men, riding two on a camel, and made a dash across the desert to grasp the power again in Riyadh. He reached the place, and leaving the camels in charge of two men outside the walls, the remainder of the party entered the town by night and made for the castle of Rashid's governor. In the open square they happened to find an old woman, and discovered from her that the governor did not inhabit the castle by night, but usually came there early every morning. They then managed to effect an entrance into the castle and locked the great gate, leaving a small postern in it open. In the morning the governor came with an escort only to be cut down as he passed through the postern door, a fate which some of his followers shared. Abdul Aziz then went up on to a tower of the castle and proclaimed that Rashid's governor had been killed and that Ibn Sa'ud had returned. The townsmen immediately sided with Ibn Sa'ud, and during the succeeding years of strife Ibn er Rashid's men were gradually forced northwards until, in 1910, peace was made between the two powers.

"Although Abd ur Rahman, Abdul Aziz's father, is still alive and lives in Riyadh, his subjects always speak of Abdul Aziz as the imam or emir, while Abdul Aziz himself speaks of Abd ur Rahman as the imam. Actually the whole of the administrative power is in the hands of Abdul Aziz while affairs of religion are dealt with by Abd ur Rahman.

"During my stay in Riyadh I was given lodgings in the palace, and all day long a stream of visitors entered and sat in my room, without exception showing me the greatest courtesy. At times I went into the town either with the emir or with a slave

he had ordered to look after me. For the most part the townsmen appeared civil and devoid of fanaticism, though occasionally an old man would ask the emir why he thus entertained a Christian in the Wahabi town. To this the emir would reply that any Englishman, Christian or not, was his friend, and dearer to him than many Muslims of other sects.

"At the present time trade is extremely poor in Riadh. The town and suburbs are said to contain 25,000 inhabitants; this seems excessive, but I was assured that 7,000 men attended prayer in the great mosque at the last 'Eed or festival,' which would bring the total population up to the number stated. In spite of this the bazaar is a comparatively small one, while food and other articles are dear. The chief article of food is dates, certainly of a delicious quality. Many other fruits are cultivated, such as figs, apricots, melons, and brinjals, while clover is grown everywhere among the date trees. There are few horses in Riadh and no cows or sheep. The emir, who owns some hundred horses, keeps them at Kharj, a district two days to the south, where grazing and running water are to be had, of which there is none in Riadh. The climate must be very healthy, and no great cold is experienced, as is evidenced by the townsmen's dress. This is extremely picturesque, and consists of a long white shirt reaching to the feet, having full sleeves that fall over the hands, below which they are slit. Over this a thin cloak of some dark material ornamented with a pattern in gold is usually worn, while the *kefie* or headdress formed by a kerchief on the head is almost invariably red, and kept in place by a gold *aghal* or ring of camel's hair ornamented with gold braid in the case of the better classes. Silver-hilted swords and sandals complete the dress.

" In view of the certain amount of splendour in this dress, it may be as well to recapitulate some of the tenets of the early days of Wahabism, which was actually a great Puritan revival occasioned by stress of circumstances. The use of tobacco was prohibited without reserve, as the plant was said to be directly favoured by Eblis or the evil one ; the use of silken garments were interdicted to men altogether, while women were permitted to wear them only to a certain extent ; poetry, music, and other amusements were condemned. Restraint was even put upon rice as a food, as it was not in use among the Arabs at the time of Muhammad, who cannot therefore have partaken of it, and there were other somewhat vexatious regulations.

" Nowadays many of these former strict Wahabi tenets have been dropped or released ; smoking, the greatest of sins in the eyes of the original Wahabi, is indulged in in private, and seldom a night passed but that one of the palace attendants did not visit me with a request for a little of the ' shameful ' as they call it. The mosques are still of a most severe and unpretentious appearance, with minarets seldom exceeding a few feet in height, as may be seen in the photograph. Attendance at the five daily prayers is enforced with the rod, and the bazaar is closed at these hours. The emir is a most constant attendant at the prayers, and in addition for an hour at dawn and again late at night a *metowa* or *mullah* reads chapters from the Koran to him in his private apartments.

" I happened to meet in Riadh one Ahmed Ibn Thanaiyan, son of a Riadh noble and a Circassian woman ; he had been educated at Constantinople and spoke French well. He and other Arabs were always ready to volunteer information with regard to the geographical problems of the south, and

arguments waxed furious in my room as to direction and extent of the great wadis there.

"Ibn Sa'ud would not fall in with my wishes to continue my journey to Jabrin and the south, so after a stay of a week, I left Riadh for el Hasa and the coast. My companions were Bedouins from the four tribes, the Ajman, Duwasir, Beni Hajar, and el Murra. Naturally of an entirely different character to the fine northern tribes, these tribesmen of the south were not improved by the fact that they were returning from Mecca after performing the pilgrimage. Bigoted and fanatical to a degree, miserable in appearance, and capable of lying in a manner unknown elsewhere in Arabia, they did not prove the best of travelling companions.

"This stretch of desert between Riadh and Hofhuf is peculiarly waterless, only one set of wells being encountered in the two hundred odd miles to el Hasa. On the eighth day from Riadh, after marching very slowly, we entered the town of Hofhuf, where I was most hospitably received by some of the Turkish officers.

"Hofhuf is a place of some 30,000 inhabitants, of whom many are Wahabis.

"The Turkish officers in garrison at Hofhuf received me most hospitably, but it was impossible to induce them to allow me to explore the country to the south, where I wished to penetrate. Leaving Hofhuf, we crossed in one night the forty miles of hopeless sand-dunes which separate this place from Ojair, its port on the Persian Gulf. Although the country appears waterless, it seems possible at certain points on the route, by digging two or three feet in the sand, to obtain a certain supply of water. Caravans or travellers often take two days and halt usually in the desert. Ojair is a small place, little more than a custom house, an old Arab fort, and a

few buildings surrounded by the desert. The place is unhealthy and fever is common. There is a considerable caravan trade with the interior. From Ojair a native sailing boat was obtained to reach Bahrein; Christmas Day was spent in beating against contrary winds, and after a somewhat protracted voyage we finally anchored at Bahrein, and I again entered the British consulate."

CHAPTER XVII

FORGOTTEN

THE journey just described, which, measured on the map, totalled 1,380 miles, placed Leachman in the very forefront of Arabian explorers. It was accomplished in the astonishing time of fifty-two days, including halts, and was performed the whole way on camel-back at an average speed of thirty miles a day when halts are deducted.

For the whole period Leachman dressed and lived exactly like an Arab, slept on the ground wrapped in his *aba*, went barefoot, and ate the same meagre fare as his companions.

Once more when the occasion arose he boldly declared himself a Christian, yet in spite of his own disparagement of his knowledge of Arabic, he could and did pass as an Arab and even on the present occasion was taken without question for an inhabitant of Mosul. Yet when it was not absolutely necessary to do otherwise, he stoutly maintained his nationality. How good was his disguise is well proved by the following account of his arrival in Bahrein on this occasion, and of his journey to Basra, written by Mr. C. F. McPherson, and to whom reference has already been made :

“ When I was stationed in Bahrein, a group of islands off the Arabian coast in the Persian Gulf, my Persian servant informed me that an Arab wished to see me. Entered a long, cadaverous, and altogether filthy-looking Bedu, who greeted me with ‘ Hullo ! got anything to eat ? ’ This

was Leachman just arrived from a six months' trek across Arabia, from Damascus, by a hitherto untravelled route. He had intended to continue his overland trek to Musqat, but owing to inter-tribal trouble had been forced to make for Ojair, on the mainland opposite Bahrein, from whence he had come by native *buggalow*. They had encountered a bad storm and he had consequently spent three days on board this craft practically without food and herded up with a crowd of dirty Arab divers. I gave him what lunch there was left, but discovered him later down in the kitchen with an Arab companion of his, who had made the whole journey with him, sitting over a large dish of rice, wolfing into this ravenously and using his fingers in the true Arab fashion. I was just off to Basra by a steamer then in port and sailing almost at once and as Leachman wanted to get to Bushire he came off with me still in his Arab clothes. The excellence of his disguise can be gauged from the fact that, on his attempting to board the steamer by the first-class companion ladder, he was roundly abused by the ship's chief officer and told that Arab deck passengers should use the other ladder."

The question has often been asked as to whether Leachman could pass as an Arab amongst Arabs. He could, and did so when he desired. Already we have several instances of his disguise as an Arab not being penetrated, as, for instance, when the Turkish gendarmes shared the same *khan* with him without suspecting him, when the guards and staff at the British Residency at Baghdad strenuously opposed his entrance, when he passed amongst the riverain Arabs on his return from his first exploration without

detection until the stupidity of his servant betrayed him, and during the present journey when it was considered advisable for him to do so, as at Ayun where, on the emir's advice, he passed himself off as an inhabitant of Mosul without anyone suspecting anything to the contrary. Later on he actually stayed with marauding Arabs who, had they suspected who he was, would have instantly killed him.

We have said in the beginning of this history that Leachman was an excellent actor, he could simulate rage, inanity and drunkenness so naturally that his closest friends were completely deceived ; moreover, he could sustain a " part " for long periods and, in spite of the strain, would maintain it to perfection till the necessity for assuming it had passed. Like all efficient impersonators, he had the gift for noting minute details of custom and behaviour, and took immense pains to study every mannerism which would assist him to maintain his part. Although by nature impetuous and impatient, he could so conquer his natural inclinations as to become stoical and quite impassive, from which state neither taunts, nor incivility, nor discomfort could entice him.

It is unfortunate that we have no other accounts of the journey he had just completed other than his own. It would appear to have passed without any untoward incident and, by good chance, in perfect safety, save for the minor incidents recorded at its commencement. His reticence about himself becomes almost exasperating at times, but whereas on other occasions, when the opportunity has occurred of speaking to those who were with him, it has invariably been the case that picturesque details have been given of Leachman's behaviour in dangerous circumstances, these are unfortunately lacking in the present instance.

Leachman was now only thirty-two years of age, and was physically and mentally at his highest pitch. It was quite obvious that he was a man of exceptional powers and remarkable ability in those directions in which he had specialized.

It becomes astonishing to see what happened to him between January, 1913, and the beginning of 1915, when he was summoned to Mesopotamia. One would have imagined that he would have been immediately appointed to that section of the General Staff at Simla which dealt with the Middle East, and that, in view of the general situation, he would have been given special facilities for studying the military situation in that area intensively. Nothing of the kind occurred.

It is true that immediately on his return to India he was summoned to Simla to give a personal account to those dealing with Arabian affairs, and was set to work to correct and bring up to date information on that country. But in ten days he was back with his regiment in Rawal Pindi.

Writing on January 29, 1913, he said :

“ I got back here from Simla yesterday. I *did* have a strenuous ten days up there and I wouldn't have let them work me so hard for nothing as is the case, if they hadn't been a nice lot. I have brought any amount away with me which will last well into the summer.”

In September of that year he enjoyed his second *shikar* trip in Kashmir. On this occasion he went after brown bear and *sambur*. He wrote to his mother on September 12 :

“ I managed to get away at last and endured the two hundred miles drive to Srinagar. I really didn't mind it very much as it only takes two days and there is lots to look at on the road.

Kashmir is perfectly glorious. The very clearest of air with just a bit of a bite in it, and the whole place a mass of apples. . . . I have come down the Jhelum in a houseboat—a lovely journey.”

He returned from this well-earned holiday to Rawal Pindi and was at once appointed Brigade Major at Peshawar, under General Young, once of his own regiment, and a man whom Leachman admired intensely for his soldierly qualities. In this capacity he earned the following remarks in his confidential reports. General Young's report for 1914 read :

“ Shows marked aptitude for staff work. Has performed duties of brigade-major with much success, being quick, reliable and conscientious.”

To this the Divisional General, General C. J. Blomfield, added :

“ I have a high opinion of Leachman's value as an officer. He is very hard and active physically and possesses sound judgment, and a very level head. A fine horseman with an excellent eye for country. A very good selection for the special service list.”

This was indeed high praise, but it is astonishing that neither general had really recognized Leachman's real merits or peculiar talents. They judged him merely as a capable staff officer, not as an individualist of outstanding merit. His achievements were entirely forgotten, and in consequence a valuable instrument was neglected. Leachman himself was so diffident and retiring, when it came to advancing himself, that his superiors never realized his true worth.

It seems almost incredible to realize, as was

actually the case, that Leachman remained in Peshawar till March, 1915. The expeditionary force, comprising an enormous fleet of forty-seven transports, left Bombay on October 16, 1914, under sealed orders. Part of this huge armada was destined for East Africa and part for Mesopotamia. Three weeks later the expeditionary force had landed in that country and the campaign had commenced. It is no exaggeration to say that, had Leachman been properly employed and sent to replace poor Captain Shakespear, who lost his life in a battle between Ibn Sa'ud's forces and those of Ibn er Rashid, the course of events in Palestine and Mesopotamia would have been changed and history itself altered. Even when someone eventually remembered him and he was summoned to join the expeditionary force, he did so as a political officer. His great genius was wasted. For Leachman was a born and inspired leader and ruler of men; and he was never given the opportunity to display his real gifts.

Let the reader follow his solitary career from now onwards and judge for himself whether England did not sacrifice one of the noblest and most brilliant of her sons.

PART II

CONSUMMATION

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SPEAR-HEAD OF CONQUEST

ON March 11, 1915, Leachman landed at Basra under the orders of Sir Percy Z. Cox, Chief Political Officer of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, then commanded by Lieut.-General Sir A. A. Bane. When we come to write the record of his achievements in Mesopotamia, we are at once faced with a great difficulty, for there are practically no records of them, due to the fact that Leachman seldom reported his actions and spoke of them less. The following reply to an inquiry for information from the office of the High Commissioner for Iraq (1925) provides sufficient commentary: "There are no official documents in our files that are likely to be of assistance. The most striking thing about Colonel Leachman was his personality, with which was compounded an unusual degree of vigour and courage, and I suggest that your purpose would be better served by people who knew and worked with him in this country." Again the Political Secretary to the High Commissioner wrote: "Only a dry statement of appointments and dates could be compiled from our records. . . ."

When Leachman landed, the situation from the Arab point of view was very unsatisfactory. Arabs are swayed by near events and are essentially opportunists. The military situation was not too promising, and Leachman's first impression was that the British were unduly dispersed—"troops were

scattered all over the countryside and the news not very good." Consequently the Arabs in this vicinity of the operations viewed with uncertainty a British triumph, and the unfortunate and prolonged halt at Basra had resulted in the Arabs for the most part siding with the Turks, a situation which could have been avoided by an immediate march on Amara and Nasiriya if such had been possible. We can sympathize with the Arab action, since their properties and territory were still occupied by the Turks, who would have taken the most drastic and terrible steps against any action hostile to themselves. The most advanced position of the British forces at this time was Qurna, at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates. There was a large force at Sha'aiba, ten miles from Basra in the Arab desert.

The situation was further complicated and made more unfavourable by our recent defeat at Ahwaz, which had thrown the Aribistan tribes on the Karun and in the Huwaiza marshes into the arms of the pro-Turkish tribe of the Beni Lam, under their redoubtable leader, Ghadhban Ibn Bunaiya.

Of these circumstances, so unfavourable from the British point of view, full advantage was taken by Turkish and German agents, especially the latter.

Under the able leadership of Herr Wassmuss, a former German consul at Bushire, and who eluded all attempts to capture him, German agents spared no means for instigating the Arab tribes to anti-British activities. They had carefully worked out, and were putting into active operation, plans for anti-British action which embraced not only Mesopotamia, but the whole Middle East up to the frontiers of India.

The Arabs hung like a swarm of flies on the flanks of the British forces, and missed no opportunities for pillage, or for stripping and slaying our wounded.

The task before the political officers, therefore, was formidable in the extreme. The lines of communication and the rear of our troops had to be protected from hostile Arab activity. Turkish and German influence had to be supplanted by confidence in the British, and faith in their ultimate triumph. The great task of pacifying and holding the country in rear of our army had to be taken over from the military authorities, who could ill spare a soldier for this purpose. That this was finally accomplished redounds principally to the credit of Leachman, who daily risked his life and acted as the spear-head of British political control. His preliminary work was backed up and consolidated by the magnificent efforts of a group of capable and courageous political officers, under the experienced and able leadership of Sir Percy Cox, supported by Colonel A. T. Wilson, Mr. St. John Philby, Colonel C. C. R. Murphy, of the Intelligence Branch, and his assistant, Captain Gribbon, Captain R. Campbell Thomson, the Assyriologist, Mr. Van Ess of the American Mission at Basra, Mr. E. C. Gregson of the Police, and others. Leachman not only acted as an officer of the political department but as an intelligence officer to the Army, and by working in disguise behind the Turkish lines, prepared the country for a friendly reception of the British troops as they advanced.

Leachman spent the first few days after his arrival taking stock of the position in order to judge in what manner his unusual qualifications could be utilized to the best advantage. Having decided on his course of action he threw himself into his task with fiery energy. His restless, impetuous nature urged him to the most active and dangerous expedients for achieving his ends. His aims were simple in theory but hazardous in execution. He first gained contact with the Arab friends he had made before the war in

this district, and here his country now began to reap the reward of his labours as a peace-time explorer. He wrote on April 2 :

“ I meet many old friends among Arabs and as they come and see me a good deal and each visit takes at least half an hour to get through, my day is fairly well taken up.”

Whatever may be said of Leachman's methods, of his violent fits of berserk rage, of his beatings and abuse of the wild Arab, the fact remains that once he gained close contact with them he earned their undying friendship and esteem. He determined to use these attributes to the fullest possible extent, and to gain personal contact with the Arab leaders wherever he could reach them, even if they resided far behind the Turkish lines.

Having renewed acquaintance with all the local notables in the Basra district—Abdul Latif Ibn Mandil, Muhammad al Sha'aina, and others—he turned his attention to those who resided farther afield.

He rode about the environs of Basra and then made more distant and most daring reconnaissances towards the Turkish positions. Under cover of darkness he frequently crept stealthily right up to the Turkish trenches and brought back invaluable information regarding their dispositions. He had a marvellous eye for country and his reports to Army Headquarters were of the greatest value, but these bold reconnaissances were undertaken not only to provide information of a military nature but to watch the activities of the Arabs for whom he was now responsible, for that was his real work.

When Leachman had established contact with the Arab leaders within the British lines, he used them to influence the tribal leaders on the flanks. Having secured the friendship of the latter he disguised

himself as a member of their community and worked in rear of the Turkish Army. That he was betrayed to the Turks on only one occasion was due to the excellence of his disguise, the loyalty of his Arab collaborators, and the rapidity and boldness of his movements. He maintained absolute secrecy concerning his plans, even from his superiors who frequently objected. But his life would have been forfeit through any premature exposure of his intentions, for the country teemed with Turkish and German spies.

On April 6 he was sent as political officer to Sha'aiba, on the left flank of the British army. He arrived at his post after wading through six miles of flooded desert, and took up his quarters with General Fry and his staff in the fort. "A most godless spot with clouds of dust and general filth of all sorts."

He was, however, impressed by the position, and at once rode round the outposts and reconnoitred the Turkish camp at Nukhaila.

On the 10th the cavalry patrols were driven in by a body of about sixty Arab horsemen, "who careered about very boldly in full view of the camp in a casual manner until the cavalry were reinforced." This was an instance of Arab participation Leachman was determined to stop and to which he did finally put an end.

On the 11th, 12th and 13th there was heavy fighting. On the evening of the 13th the British advanced to the attack, capturing many prisoners, and the enemy retired, leaving the ground covered with their dead and wounded. On the night of the 14th the Turks retreated, abandoning their camp. Here is the typical laconic description of the battle written to his sister Mabel on the 15th, in reply to a letter from her congratulating him on seeing active service :

"Thanks very much for your letter of congratulations. Of course it is a matter for congratulation to get on service at all ; but I am not sure the job suits me very well. I don't think I am a diplomat." (He refers to his appointment to the Headquarters of the Political Service, where he had to be tactful in dealing with the military.) "I have too bad a temper. I was lucky to come in for *the* show of this part of the world, and it was a great fight. I have never had such a shelling, and we had to sit in the open instead of being in the trenches. The British regiments were wonderful, and so were the British officers of native regiments. . . . I am so glad Joan (his niece) is getting on so well. . . ."

There is hardly a word about himself or what he had been doing, or why he, a political officer and therefore a non-combatant, was sitting in the open being heavily shelled ; only there was the usual generous praise for the man who was doing the job.

He ends :

"I am obliged for your incitement to marry, but it would have to be a Basra Jewess, and most of them weigh 18 stone when they are fifteen, with a face on top like an angel which is sad. I hate flesh. . . . Love to all."

On April 22 he was back in Basra, but the time he had spent in Sha'aiba was sufficient to link the wavering Arabs to the British cause. Unfortunately we have practically no information as to how he accomplished it, but the following extract from an appreciation written so admirably by one who was his friend and in close contact with him will serve for this and other instances :

“ His success in policy with the Arabs was based on their respect for his courage, justice and liberality, combined with a certain fear of his unrelenting hatred of lies and treachery. He could on occasion astonish them with a very cyclone of wrath. Many a sheikh has behaved, under the influence of Leachman, like a gentleman, though he may have been formerly an unmitigated scoundrel. He was essentially a ruler of the tribes, not the towns-people. His methods of action were somewhat forcible, and therefore understood and appreciated by the tribes who would not understand other methods. But, with all the masterfulness and impulsiveness, and respect, not unmixed with fear, which his name inspired, he was implicitly trusted and popular among them, and a very real friend.”

He never broke faith with his Arab friends, or even with his enemies ; his word was his bond and they knew it. If he said he would punish, he would do so with certainty and terror. If he said he would reward, the recompense would be as surely and generously bestowed.

During these early and most difficult days at Basra, however, he had to build up his reputation among the Arabs, and it had to be a reputation of such a nature that no enemy intrigue could undermine, no hostile gold supplant it. The first quality he displayed was a courage and contempt of death beyond any courage possessed by the Arabs themselves, and so on some of his daring explorations of the Turkish lines he took with him sometimes one, sometimes two Arabs. When fear pressed them to retreat, his own intrepidity forced them forward. In the end they were more fearful of being called

cowards by Leachman and of his violent wrath than they were of the danger which confronted them. Next he had to show that his arm was long and his revenge sure. His Intelligence Service was wonderful, and he employed everywhere quite young children as a part of his organization.

News came to Leachman at Basra in the beginning of May that a sheikh behind the flank of the Turkish lines, who had sworn friendship, had later informed the Turks that Leachman had visited him, and the purpose of his visit. News travels fast in Arabia. Within a few hours Leachman knew of it. He had just bought an Arab pony "as wild as sin and goes about the country shrieking." At nightfall, unknown to any, he disguised himself, passed round the flank of the British line—he had visited the front line during the afternoon—picked up some of his Arab friends, and, circling the Turkish lines, suddenly appeared at the sheikh's house. He shouted his accusations at him, so that all might hear, and the man was unable to deny them. Leachman thrashed him in front of his own people and his Arab friends, and took him back into Basra.

These sudden appearances and swift vengeance left men paralysed, and they never knew when he would appear. On such occasions his wrath knew no bounds; he became a fiend incarnate, and so overwhelming was his passion that he could render a host powerless.

In this particular instance he made no report whatsoever to those in authority. Action was needed: he had taken it, and the matter was finished, as far as he was concerned.

Exciting as was this work in the neighbourhood of Basra, it was too restricted for his boundless energy. He was like a pent-up volcano, and chafed at the inevitable restraint on his actions and movements and

to office routine. On May 15 he wrote to his mother :

" I am getting very fidgety again. I would like to go off into the wilderness, but I am afraid that is out of the question for the present."

He was not destined to go off into the wilderness, however, as he was sent as political officer with the troops in their first disastrous advance on Baghdad. He proceeded to Amara, then to Kut, and finally to within forty-five miles of Baghdad, to the neighbourhood of which the Turks had steadily retreated so that the occupation of the city by the British was daily expected.

On October 10, 1915, he wrote from Aziziya outside Baghdad :

" I cannot remember if I wrote from here before or not ; at any rate this is the farthest north for the moment ; I have been 15 miles further on myself, and came back with the Turkish army after me. But that was some time ago and we are now sitting looking at each other at close quarters. The aeroplanes go to Baghdad and, I presume, gladden the eyes of the English women who are still shut up there.

" It has now changed from horribly hot to bitterly cold. I am not sure I do not prefer the heat—you can at least then take off clothes ; but you can't put on clothes if you have not got them.

" I am full of work from morning to night. It extends from buying sheep for a whole division and straw for about 10,000 animals up to paying a thousand pounds to an Arab sheikh to do some dirty work. It is therefore interesting and full of variety. I thought I was overpaid, but I'm not. The day is a twenty-four hour work one."

It is a pity we do not know what Leachman was doing fifteen miles ahead of the British army, but as a matter of fact, he was nearly always ahead of the army when it advanced. He moved so rapidly, either on a camel or on horseback, that he always out-distanced the normal patrols. His first action was to gain contact with the Arabs through whose territory the Turks had retreated ; he informed them of the approach of the British, ordered them to produce supplies, and gained a mass of valuable information, both political and military. Moreover, he organized his intelligence service as he went, and brought those he considered most useful on to his pay-roll, so that Philby in due course had "the strange task of dealing with his accounts and often large financial operations hastily scribbled on scraps of paper, and not too easy either to decipher or to understand." Leachman used all his powers of persuasion to bring the more powerful men on to the side of the British, or frighten some to inactivity. For this purpose he was constantly on the move. Often travelling all night to some isolated village beyond the Turkish lines. The dangerous missions he frequently undertook alone. No wonder his days were full.

We hear nothing of the miles he travelled, the fatigues he endured, the perils he ran—for it was perilous work. It is indeed miraculous that he was not shot at sight by some pro-Turkish sheikh. He was frequently ambushed, but the rapidity of his movements, his unexpected appearances and disappearances, and his wonderful eye for country and his knowledge of it, made all such attempts abortive. Not only did he already possess a fair knowledge of the country as a whole, but his ceaseless activity and continual movement made him intimate with the district for miles around the British. He had a most

uncanny gift of retaining a mental picture of the country he had once passed over, so that he knew the desert, as the chief sheikh of the Anaiza states, "better than the Arabs themselves and could pass everywhere without a guide." This gift was the means of saving over 5,000 British troops.

A week later, when the British and Turkish armies were still face to face at Aziziya, Leachman gave in a letter a further example of his habit of dealing out quick punishment :

"Still in the same place you see, and all very fed up. Why, I don't quite know. I am not particularly so myself, but *I* have lots to do. They have just told me to enlist a large number of Arab horsemen—I lightly suggested that I should command them myself." (The letter is interrupted, and continues four days later.) "Had to go away down the river to teach a lesson to some Arabs who had fired on our ships. They foolishly forgot that their camp was in range of the river, so a lyddite shell in the middle of the sheikh's tent probably taught them the error of their ways. I got back just in time to assist in a night attack by the whole force on the nearest Turks."

Leachman guided the advance, hence the necessity for his taking part in the attack.

"We marched all night in the piercing cold, and at dawn found the Turks just gone. We got on to their trail, though, and gave them a nasty start."

The long inactivity of the British forces and their obvious inability to drive the Turks back had an unsettling effect on Leachman's Arabs, and they succumbed to Turkish pressure and got out of hand.

On November 10 he wrote :

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"Still here but not for long I hope. I have got in for a good deal of skirmishing lately, usually after a cold night out." (When did he ever get any rest?) "We have surprised the Arabs a bit lately and killed a certain number of them, with the result that my flock are behaving themselves better than they did. With our arrival in Baghdad I hope they will really settle down."

From the fact that he was out all night and attacked at dawn, it was clear that he was already adopting the method I have myself seen him employ, namely, a careful night reconnaissance to find out where the culprits had camped, then back to his punitive force which he would guide in person in the darkness and lead to the attack at daybreak. That was his usual procedure, whether acting with British or Arabs as assistants.

His letter continued :

"My former country, Amara, is wonderfully quiet and well-behaved, and the Arabs have become model citizens." (A fine but unintentional tribute to the work he had accomplished.) "I am feeling very aggrieved at your neglect of me—I expected showers of socks and warm things and sweets, etc., but they never came. The Force get most wonderful parcels. . . . We get nothing to eat now, I suppose because we are a long way away. Perhaps it is just as well you don't send them, as I should never get them ! . . . Sir Percy Cox is on his way here : he generally follows in my track, amending my errors."

The next letter records the greatest disaster we had suffered in the war—not only on account of the loss sustained but through the loss of prestige.

Leachman's letter is dated Lajj, November 26, 1915 :

" We have had a very big battle at Ctesiphon since last I wrote. The Turks had a very strong position and a large number of troops. Our men were splendid. I could not have believed that men could have faced such a blaze of fire, shell and rifle, without an atom of cover—you will have seen an account in the papers, so I need tell you no more about it. The operations lasted for four days. The first night I was marching all night, the second I was being attacked, the third I was looking for a lost convoy of wounded, and incidentally being shot at by friend and foe, and the fourth night I was marching. It is now the day after the fourth, so excuse me if the letter isn't all it should be. I have had so many friends killed."

The defeat at Ctesiphon led to the disastrous retreat of the British army. Instead of what was thought would be the quick and easy capture of Baghdad, the British were ruthlessly flung back to Amara, while the 6th Division was sacrificed at Kut, partly to hold up the Turkish advance, partly because it was incapable of further retreat. The men, after the gruelling experience of Ctesiphon, had been exposed to a relentless pursuit, so the 6th Division under General Townshend dug itself in at Kut-al-Amara to stem the Turkish advance and to rest the men. It was thought that it would not be long before the army, under cover of Kut, would be re-organized, and the Turks once more defeated.

Food was short, the enemy had almost surrounded the place, and it was decided, if possible, to get the cavalry and some of the guns away. They would be useless there, and the need to feed the horses would

be beyond the meagre resources at the disposal of this small force. Could they be got away? That was the question. There was only one man who could do it, and that man was Leachman. His wonderful knowledge of the country, his coolness and courage, were the only hope of so desperate a venture. As we have said, the Turks had almost encircled the place. It was a desperate chance, the odds heavily against his succeeding, but he did succeed, though small mention has ever been made of his feat. There is no record of reward or even thanks. This is what Khidr Ibn Abbas, Leachman's guide in 1910, and his guide and agent in 1917-20, has written about it :

" One of his adventures which ought to be recorded with a pen of gold is that when General Townshend's forces were besieged in Kut, it was desirable that a portion of the force should be got away and rejoin the British force camped at Bani Sad village. Colonel Leachman was delegated for this difficult errand, and managed to escape with 5,000 troops and two batteries of guns under cover of darkness, while the town of Kut was practically surrounded on every side.

" One stands astonished before this man of genius, and certainly there are very few in military annals who could have accomplished these dangerous deeds."

And here we have Leachman's own account of it, written from Amara on December 13, 1915 :

" You must excuse the very bad typing, but my typewriter has been in the war, like master, and we are both feeling a bit old. You will see from the address that I have made a slightly retrograde movement. I came out of Kut with a crowd of cavalry to nurse them down to Ali

Al Gharbi, and then could not get back again owing to the enemy on the road, so I am now going to Amara as Political to a new army corps commander, and am writing on my launch, which I managed to get hold of again. On my way back from Aziziya, a launch in which my kit and servants were, was captured by the Turks with the result that I have not now a single possession in the world except what I stand up in—I do not mind that so much, but it is hopeless losing my Arabs. As a matter of fact, I have just heard that the most valuable one has escaped and arrived at Kut, but it is rather difficult getting him out of that place. To add to my troubles, on one day my best Arab pony was stolen by one of my Arab escort, and the next day my second best one was shot. I had a certain amount of luck, as I was knocked head over heels by a shell without any damage except to my nerves. . . . If I told you all that I would like to, my letter would not survive the censor."

This disaster to the British undid all the work Leachman had accomplished among the Arabs north of Kut. As always happens with the semi-civilized Arab, they turned with the tide and, judging by what their eyes told them, which was that the Turks were on top, they once more broke loose into wild disorder, and pretended by their deeds to the advancing Turks that they had never hoped for anything better than the defeat of the British. They thought now that they were safe in so doing, as Leachman himself had to go with the retreating British. Leachman was enraged to see this part of his work crumbling to bits and to do all over again.

"My stay in Amara is only likely to be temporary, and I hope to return to the front, with

the full intention of handing over every Arab I can find to summary justice. They are brutes, and for the last fortnight I hardly remember a moment when one was not being shot at by them, certainly from a safe distance, but none the less annoying."

Leachman, so straight himself, so single-minded, could not abide duplicity. There was a certain amount of grim humour in the situation, but this the angry man could not at the time appreciate, nor was his nature one which could condone an offence, whatever the contributing circumstances might be. Making full allowance for the reprehensible nature of their treachery, the Arabs were, in fact, in rather a difficult situation. Theebb and flow of the varying fortunes of the campaign at this stage left them one day submerged in Leachman's bounty, and the next, stranded and exposed to the biting chill of Turkish resentment. They sought, as more or less primitive people always will, to forestall any dissatisfaction on the part of the Turks by an excess of zeal in their favour. In brief, circumstances were too strong even for Leachman. Could he have remained among them, or had they been accessible to him, there would have been a different tale to tell, as was proved later during the rebellion, when practically single-handed he kept the Euphrates frontier, 200 miles in length, at peace, when the whole of the rest of Mesopotamia was in flaming revolt. In the present instance he was forced to abandon the area of his activities and so "from a safe distance" the Arabs celebrated his departure.

The disaster of Ctesiphon and the siege of Kut brought the Mesopotamian campaign into the full glare of public notice. It was at last realized that we had to take the war in Mesopotamia seriously.

A most brilliant success had been missed by a hair's breadth, and the failure was due, principally, to the fact that the Mesopotamia front was "starved," and the necessary means to achieve a great and lasting triumph denied. Either these means must be provided, and the full fruits of victory striven for, or there must be a general retirement to Basra. The controversy raged back and forth, and it is not pleasant now to recall how near we went to surrender and to suffering the greatest moral defeat of our history. Happily the bolder counsels prevailed, and, strangely enough, the beleaguered garrison at Kut turned the scales in favour of the more noble and courageous course. The British people were not content to see the gallant 6th Division left to its fate without making a serious effort to succour it. As Mr. Philby so aptly comments :

"To relieve Kut required a large army on a thoroughly modern footing of organization, and that army, though it did not relieve Kut, was able to repair the damage done and to lay the foundations of a great and permanent conquest."

Meantime Leachman had to repair the loss of his kit and servants. The former he accomplished with fair success, the latter he found more difficult to supply himself with. On December 27, 1915, he wrote from Amara :

"I have come here for a day or two to try and buy some clothes, etc., which isn't very easy. However, I have done fairly well. I have also bought a new stud of ponies, but servants are unobtainable. I am afraid they think that I am a fire-eater and get them into danger, which is quite incorrect. As soon as I get back to Kut, I shall get my most excellent Arab boy. . . . I go

up again to-morrow. I am now the political officer to the Army Corps commander—a very charming person. He has only just arrived with all the new troops and knows nothing of the country, so I have lots to do. . . . It is not so nice here now; one used to know everybody, but now with all these new troops one is always seeing new people and most of my friends are in Kut, where I wish *I* could be. I shall be soon, though.”

Leachman refused, right up to the end, to contemplate the surrender of Kut, and he felt the loss of his friends shut up there very keenly. He is widely credited with having got into the besieged town on more than one occasion. If so, he made no mention of the fact in his letters, but since he never wrote about any of his real exploits, such omission is not proof that he never accomplished the feat. That he attempted it is certain, and that he succeeded is more than probable, since he nearly lost his life in swimming the Tigris to rejoin the main army.

As at Sha'aiba, so at Kut: at Amara he reconnoitred the Turkish position with the greatest daring, even with rashness. Some times alone, at others with a party of Arabs, he deliberately drew the enemy's fire in order to ascertain whether a particular section was occupied or not.

In addition to this work and to that connected with supplies for the troops and his intelligence work, he maintained touch with the desert tribes and settled Arabs far removed from the scene of operations.

Concerning his real activities, his letters as usual say very little, and unfortunately there are now no means of ever ascertaining a tithe of what he accomplished.

On January 30, 1916, he wrote from the front, making no mention of how he was really employed :

" I am overjoyed to receive a parcel of warm things which came out in record time. But I am shocked—whose nasty mind suggested insect powder, which, by the way, smashed up, and absolutely defeated the socks from ever harbouring little strangers? I cannot tell you much about the show for obvious reasons. I am always looked upon as rather a Spartan because I live and sleep in so little clothes. I stick to this reputation for the simple reason that I have nothing else to wear.

" I told you, I think, that Thorne is up here. He is so ridiculous. I happen to know that he is expecting to become a father at any time, and he thinks I don't know, but he comes to me at all hours of the day to send cables for him with ridiculous inquiries about his wife, who is in England. He never pays me for them, but probably thinks I send them free."

In spite of the cheery tone of his letter he was depressed and tired and longed for a visit to civilization and shops. It was not to be wondered at, but he excused himself :

" I don't often get taken like this, but there are limits even to the most cheery person."

On March 3 he wrote again :

" We are still battle fighting. The weather is now delightful and spring is here. I have had a change by two visits to Amara in four days. The first time I was there for three hours, and the second for four hours, so I did not see much. I always have a love for Amara. I have quite a triumphal march through the bazaars there, as

all my old friends, or rather acquaintances, come up to shake hands. I am afraid it is done chiefly out of curiosity. This time I arrived at six in the morning, and by eight there was a story that I was on my way to Bombay in disgrace, having sent out a force without the general's orders, which were all captured except myself."

The numbers of people in the bazaars who came to shake him by the hand, some out of curiosity, some out of friendship, testify to the reputation he had already gained—stories of his actions and his escapes, of his judgments and methods were circulating in the coffee-stalls and over the camp-fires. His tall, thin form was now familiar up and down the river, in the villages and in the desert. The reception he received in Amara was a common occurrence in other places far removed from the scene of his exploits. The Arab bore him an affection seldom, if ever, before bestowed on a European.

At the end of another month he was really stale and tired ; his unremitting labours, exposure and lack of sleep for so long and continuous a period, were beginning to tire out even his iron strength. He had one great pleasure, the receipt of his periodicals :

"The *Times* and *Blackwood* turn up most regularly. I hurriedly try to read the latter before someone walks off with it. The political officer is the universal provider, and what he won't part with they take. It has become my duty now to provide fresh meat, grass, firewood, ponies for transport, guides, private servants, eggs, chickens, milk, fish caught by my men—in fact, anything that anyone does not know how to get. In addition I am supposed to know

every Arab in the country by name and face. Also exactly when the river will rise and by how much. If it is going to rain, how much? and how long? In fact, it is a hard life, and by the enclosed beautiful photograph you will see the amazing effect it has had on the political officer's feet. If I do not have a change of air soon I shall certainly get thrown out."

In addition to the strain of his onerous duties, Leachman was sick at heart at the situation of the unfortunate garrison at Kut. He was a man of tremendously strong sensibility, and his feelings were all the stronger because they were suppressed within him. He was constantly on the spot, in touch with the enemy's lines, in perpetual contact with his front line troops. He was accurately and fully informed of the state of the beleaguered garrison, and, rightly or wrongly, he was convinced that the siege could have been raised.

By a trick of fate he might actually have been the instrument for the salvation of Kut. After several fruitless attempts to rescue the garrison, it was decided to attack the Turkish position on the west bank of the river, Kut being on the east bank. The key to the position was a very strong redoubt named the "Dujaila." Could it be taken the Turkish position on the east bank would be enfiladed, and a bridge-head for crossing the river secured. It is a fact which has received but little notice that frequently when a serious attack was planned, Leachman was to be found alone in close proximity to the enemy position. It was so on this occasion.

General ——'s Brigade had been deputed to attack the redoubt. All was in readiness. The attacking brigade had secretly moved to its preparatory

position. The troops on the east bank were to make a demonstration in force to pin the Turkish reserves and distract their attention from the real assault on the Dujaila redoubt.

The fate of the garrison hung on the result. In the concealing gloom Leachman stealthily approached the formidable position. He crept closer and closer. Not a sound to be heard. Not a laugh, nor any murmuring voice. What did the strange silence portend? He crept closer still. The same brooding silence. Then cautiously he actually entered the fortification. He stood amazed, dumbfounded. The redoubt was empty! The garrison was being relieved, and for some unknown reason the relieving troops had not yet arrived, but they were to be expected at any moment and every second was of vital importance. Leachman rushed back and reported his discovery to the Brigadier and implored him to occupy the redoubt. According to the plan of operations the redoubt was just about to be shelled by our artillery. The Brigadier insisted on adhering to the agreed plan. By a cruel stroke of fate telephonic communication with Headquarters was interrupted, and the Brigadier was not to be moved from his resolve.

There has been a bitter controversy over this incident, but certain facts are clear and undisputed. It is quite certain that the redoubt was unoccupied for sufficient time in which to take possession of it. It is equally certain that Leachman reported the fact to the general in command. The latter took no action, but adhered to his original plans. When the attack eventually took place the redoubt had been reoccupied, and our men failed to take it, suffering terrible punishment in their vain attempt. This was the last effort to relieve Kut. Our troops could do no more. They had struggled in vain time and again

with every circumstance against them. Rain repeatedly converted the battlefield into a glutinous bog, in which they sank up to their knees, sometimes even up to their waists. The elements had fought for the Turks, and now, when success seemed assured, the cup of victory was snatched away.

The incident left an indelible mark on Leachman's mind. He never wrote a word about it. He never spoke about it until eventually he went home on leave, and then, in his home and to his people, he voiced his bitterness and disgust. Indeed, he felt it keenly to the day of his death. From the very *commencement of the siege*, when he led the cavalry to safety, through the weary time of preparation when he slaved for the welfare of the relieving force and risked his life repeatedly to furnish that force with adequate information and supplies, to the last moment when, as a result of his intrepidity, he made his sensational discovery, he had laboured to save the honour of England and rescue his friends; no man could have done more. It was in vain. No wonder that his fiery nature writhed under the lash of failure.

If we regard the matter dispassionately, however, tragic as was the surrender, and still more tragic the fate of the wretched heroic garrison, the capture of Kut sealed the doom of the Turkish army in Mesopotamia. No longer spending itself in fruitless and bloody assaults before the preparations and means were sufficient, the British army in Mesopotamia, made proficient and resourceful through its bitter experiences, found time for reorganization, and the arrival of the necessary supplies and equipment made it a powerful fighting machine which finally swept the Turks back to the walls of Mosul, 400 miles away.

After the fall of Kut Leachman resumed his more or less normal duties of providing the troops with

local supplies and keeping the Arabs in the army's rear in order by violent means: "I don't mean beating them but cursing them." And we may well imagine how his rages would terrify them. He travelled constantly up and down the river interviewing the various Arab sheikhs and controlling his district.

But in between these normal duties he disappeared at intervals on strange missions—no one knows where or why. He simply vanished. After one of these absences of over a month he wrote simply, on June 1, 1916:

"I am afraid I have not written for some time, but there is little to say and I have been away from the means of writing a good deal."

Leachman was, as has already been shown, extremely reticent, but when he had been on some specially hazardous work he said absolutely nothing at all. When his activities were connected with the troops he wrote something of what took place because there were others present, and the main facts would be generally known. But when he was entirely on his own, on work of some special nature, he remained silent, and unless chance provides us with a few details we remain for ever in ignorance.

He fell ill with paratyphoid in July, and for three weeks refrained from reporting sick. Finally he was forced to go into hospital, but resisted all efforts to send him to India. After practising some deceit on the doctors, he escaped in a boat from the hospital, before he was cured. By the end of August he had fully recovered.

On August 22 Leachman received a telegram from home, congratulating him on being awarded the order of the Companionship of the Indian Empire. Leachman only coveted one decoration, and that

was still denied him, although he had earned it a score of times—the D.S.O., for which he had been recommended as a lad in South Africa. He was very irate at receiving the C.I.E. as it was a civilian and not a military order :

“ Thank you very much for your telegram of congratulations on a C.I.E. I suppose that is it, though I have not heard of it from any other source. Young men who sit in offices in Simla get it, and it is not given for service in the field, I think, but it is alright. . . .” (Later on he relents somewhat, in spite of its being a civil order, and, as a man wrote to him, reserved for elderly incompetent Indian officials.) “ However, it has a beautiful blue ribbon. . . . I am very fit, and I do not find the weather at all bad. You will grieve to hear that I have hardly a hair on my head. It may come again, but it does not look like it.”

On September 8 he wrote that the Turks, after their summer rest, were beginning to get lively again.

“ I was amused last evening. We were having a jumping competition, and a regimental band, a new arrival, was playing. The Turks thought it a good opportunity to plump some exceedingly big shells into the camp not far from the entertainment : we were not disturbed.”

Later he explained the reason.

“ I have discovered the reason the Turks shelled us last night. We have a bishop up here. Exactly this time last year when we were in the very same place, another bishop visited us, and we were very badly shelled in the middle of the night. I wish he would go away.”

On November 9 he was off again on one of his Arab "strafes," and strangely enough, he was, for once, communicative about it :

" I am leaving to-night on a little ' strafe ' of my own with Arabs. As it means about 100 miles in 24 hours I expect to arrive back slightly the worse for wear. But it ought to be great fun : most of the Arab shows I have been in are splendid—but this one is on rather a bigger scale than the others."

His next letter provided details :

" I have had a splendid adventure since I last wrote. A certain camp of hostile Arabs had been very annoying lately in raiding our camels and generally being violent. I collected a crowd of mounted Arabs, about 600 strong, and brought them up the river on the bank that they were not on. I crossed them over the bridge at Sheikh Saad and, starting at dusk, reached the neighbourhood of the camp that we were going for by dawn. That was fifty miles. We successfully rounded up their sheep, about 10,000, and started to drive them back without any trouble. After we had got about 15 miles the enemy began to get troublesome, and they were assisted by some gendarmes who shot more or less straight, which is not the game among Arabs. Three hundred of my crowd had enough of it, and pushed off and waited for me twenty miles further on. We kept on dropping our sheep, and finally reached home with only about 2,000. We had a few losses and so did they. But the people who really distinguished themselves were the sheep, who marched fifty miles in fifteen hours, and on a hot day, too. We did

about 100 miles in 24 hours, and I now consider myself fit. I don't know what my pony thinks about ! ”

On January 16, 1917, he wrote :

“ Do you know I am a colonel ? I got a brevet on January 1st for some unknown reason. You may have missed it among the masses of names. May I point out the foolishness of things : I first got a C.I.E., which is a purely civilian decoration and therefore given to me for civil work, in fact as in the *Gazette* ‘ Assistant Political Officer, Basra,’ which I have never been. Next, I get a brevet, which is a purely military reward, presumably for soldier work ; one or the other, therefore, must be useless to me. . . . All the same, doesn't it sound beautiful — ‘ Colonel Leachman ’ ? ”

His time with the army was now nearly at an end, and there were hints of a fresh appointment.

“ I have a sort of idea that I may be moved from this front to another place. I said I would and it looks like a very fine job ; but it is difficult to find a more interesting billet than my present one : it is the best in this country.”

His next letter was dated February 2. The intervening time, of which there is again no record, was spent in his mysterious wanderings—probably out into the Arabian desert to gain touch with the Bedouin tribes and enlist their aid on the British side. For he was undoubtedly preparing the ground for his future work which was to exceed in brilliance even that which he had already accomplished with the army. Its strenuous nature can be glimpsed from the following laconic message :

" Feb. 2, 1917.

" I have just returned to my launch at the back of the front after a lot of wandering about, killing my ponies and achieving little. Everything is going well and the troops are making good progress."

He had definitely been given a new post and was proceeding to Basra to be informed of its details.

" I shall be glad of the change, and I think it will be good in every way."

CHAPTER XIX

A NEEDLESS REVOLT 1917 TO OCTOBER 1918

LEACHMAN'S new work took him into the desert west and south-west of Qubair and right up to the neighbourhood of Najaf.

The whole desert was in a serious state of unrest. *Raiding parties smothered the country, for raiding was a profitable business since the Turks paid high prices for commodities of all kinds.* The Turks and Germans were straining every nerve to induce the tribes to raid British communications and to raise the fanaticism of the inhabitants of the outlying towns and villages. The Muntafik under Ajaimi al Sa'dun were restless and there was every prospect of serious trouble arising in that quarter. There were several villages which had never seen a British soldier and had not even heard the distant sound of the guns, and whose inhabitants had not realized the changes which were taking place through the triumph of British arms. Uncertainty prevailed. High prices caused discontent, which was easily converted into active hostility by German and Turkish agents. It was necessary to curb these activities before they became a real menace in the British rear. Moreover, it was necessary to institute some form of blockade in the desert which would at least reduce supplies reaching the Turks, especially those operating in the Euphrates, even if it was not possible to check them completely. It was felt that the only man who could deal adequately with the situation was Leachman.

It was bad luck for him to be transferred from the front just when the army was about to achieve its most brilliant success and the fall of Baghdad was pending. He had certainly earned the right to share the triumphs which quickly followed each other at this period.

On March 4 he wrote.

"I am wandering about in the desert. I seem to have left Kut side at a bad moment. It is the first stroke of bad luck I have had for a long time so I ought not to grumble. It does, however, feel a bit hard after sitting in front of the Turks for a year, to leave at the moment of success."

A week later Sir Stanley Maude had captured Baghdad. If Leachman was denied his share of the triumph, at least he had the satisfaction of knowing that to him belonged the sole credit for the organization of the political work up to the battle-line itself and the political preparation, in advance of the army, of the country which would ease the advance and ensure that its occupation became less difficult and dangerous.

Leachman was not permitted to remain for long on special duty. He left for Cairo in the middle of April, having been appointed temporarily to Sir Mark Sykes who, with Monsieur Picot, had reached that city to study the Middle Eastern situation close at hand. But before he left Leachman had gone through an astonishing series of adventures. He had been shot at no less than eight times from close range. He had traversed hundreds of miles of desert, and it was during this brief period that he gained definitely for himself that great ascendancy over the wilder elements which he maintained to the day of his death.

By the time he left for Cairo he had brought about



PREUSSER (SECOND FROM LEFT) CHIEF GERMAN AGENT
IN MESOPOTAMIA IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS CAPTURE

[See Page 349]



LEACHMAN (IN FRONT OF WHITE CAMEL IN CENTRE OF
PHOTOGRAPH) WITH A PICKED GROUP OF BEDOUIN AT
A WELL, JUST ABOUT TO START ON ONE OF HIS
MYSTERIOUS MISSIONS

[See Page 293]

a very considerable change for the better in the situation, and he left behind him a very wholesome dread of his name among those who were inclined to act as agents for the Germans or Turks, or who indulged in looting or raiding.

It was during this period, too, that he employed to the full his method of using friendly Arabs to attack his enemies ; but he always led them himself and such was his gift for leadership, that they never failed to follow him even when the odds were greatly against them. The violence of his attacks, the determination with which they were delivered and the drastic punishment he inflicted, had a salutary and lasting effect. So justified were his punishments, so chivalrous his behaviour, that he gained far more friends than he made enemies, while his care for those who assisted him and his generous treatment of them became proverbial in the desert. His feats of endurance were spoken of with amazed astonishment. He travelled tremendous distances, first with one party of his friends and then, when they were exhausted, with another. After a few weeks of unending activity even Leachman began to feel the strain. In a letter written to his brother-in-law on March 19 he expressed how greatly he longed for a short respite :

" . . . It is my fate never to get into a house. Every other political officer lives in a comfortable house with every luxury, while I, the miserable one, wander about on horse, launch or camel. This last stunt beats the lot for hard life, and though shells do not fall about me everybody has a shot at me."

And on March 26 he again wrote to his brother-in-law :

" . . . I have one or two good ponies. I often

do one hundred miles in the twenty-four hours and possibly a scrap as well and they never tire. Those I have not looted I pay about twenty pounds for."

The statement in the last letter gives some idea of the distances he covered and the speed at which he travelled. To the Bedouin his appearance became uncanny; in fact, he was reputed to be possessed of miraculous powers of movement. They could not otherwise account for his appearing on the same day at two different places which were so far apart as to make a journey between them, on a single day, appear an impossibility.

Another astonishing thing about Leachman, and to which reference has already been made, was the extraordinary speed at which he received intelligence of happenings far out in the desert, or at places far removed from himself.

He was not, of course, invariably successful in reaching the scene of an action in time, or catching up on every occasion with marauding parties or "wanted" individuals. He sometimes spent long and profitless days and nights in the broiling sun or biting cold, but his failures were few and far between. It is typical of him that such failures threw him into deep fits of despondency. He at once began to think he was "no good" or that he had lost the knack of handling a situation.

How he escaped assassination during this period, considering the number of attempts made upon his life, is a cause for wonder. He had no bodyguard, and, although there was a large price on his head, frequently travelled alone, or with his personal servant, and placed himself in the most hazardous situations. Happily he escaped every peril, and his reputation was such that his very name became a talisman to protect others.

In the very midst of these activities, he was suddenly ordered to Cairo, which he reached on April 24. From there he wrote two letters home which are worth quoting.

The first is written from Shepherd's Hotel on April 29, 1917 :

"My dwelling, as you will see from the address, is more or less comfortable. I reached here on the 24th and since have been fairly busy. I have found time for a certain amount of sight-seeing, and Cairo is certainly very interesting. I can understand little of the Arabic spoken here, though they generally understand me. To-day I have an audience with the Sultan, when he will have to choose between my French or my Arabic, which are both vile. To-morrow I am off again in a man-of-war down the Red Sea for ten days, and return here. If I am so delicate still when I come back I shall have to go into hospital. I am most miserably seedy and can hardly walk upstairs. The doctors say that I ought to have a week's rest in hospital, but we cannot rest in war-time. It is a nuisance just when one has a chance of living on the fat of the land. The weather here is beautifully cool, except that in the first two days I was here, a wind called the *khamisin* blew, which was very hot and unpleasant. This is an absolutely new world of soldiering. Full of Australians in swasher hats. I have not met a single officer I know. They all have about ten medals apiece of every sort except war medals. It is a great gathering place for M.P.'s and sprigs of nobility, for if you can go to war from Shepherd's Hotel there is no particular hardship. They are great sticklers for dress and that one should wear a pair of spurs is of much the

same importance as beating the Turks. I am afraid we are very uncivilized in poor old Mesopotamia ; however we do defeat the Turks. I was so glad to get off that horrible P. & O. and all the dreadful people. I am afraid one does not see enough of the world in the Army and really one wants educating up to those people. I lunch with the High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate, and thanks be to the gods that it is lunch, as his household has ' gone dry ' and though I do not drink at lunch, it adds to the cheeriness of nations at dinner."

He wrote again on May 10 :

" I only arrived back in Cairo yesterday after a trip down the Red Sea to various places. I stopped at one place for about four days, and commend me to the Arabian coast of the Red Sea for absolute hopelessness. Not a blade of grass or bush, but miles of volcanic desert and stones. Most vile form of Arab, worse than the worst Mesopotamian specimen. I was rejoiced to see Cairo again, as I have at last managed to recover from my complaint and I am enjoying myself and the good food. I am not immensely struck with this famous hotel, and the form of Egyptian oaf who waits is appallingly bad. But the rooms are nice with a bath-room to each, and the food is good and an orchestra plays most of the day. There are some lovely motor rides round Cairo with excellent roads, and as Government pay I do a long round every evening. I had a long interview with the Sultan, who was very pleasant, and also the High Commissioner, Sir Reginald Wingate, who is perfectly charming. Otherwise I am not much struck. I travel

round with Sir Mark Sykes, who you probably know of. He is about my age and most amusing and astoundingly clever. I have learnt many things about the world, which have opened my eyes. I am shortly leaving for the Red Sea again and shall go on to Aden and pick up the P. & O. there. Unfortunately they have sunk my particular one, which I had chosen on account of the size and suitability to carry me through the monsoon. From Bombay I shall pay a flying visit to the regiment and then to Basra. Do not address any more letters here, but to Basra. I do not know if you saw that poor old Foster Thorne was killed in Mespot. I was so grieved. Also another major of ours, Mitchell. He had been at the front one day. The other brother who was in the regiment was killed by a fall from his pony in Peshawar a few months ago. I shall be leaving here on the 15th and will write again before I leave."

Leachman visited Rabegh and Wejh. At the latter place Feisal had his temporary headquarters and he invited Leachman and myself to a meal in his guest tent at which Lawrence was also present. It was an interesting experience, sitting there on the ground partaking of Feisal's hospitality and listening to these three men who met in this arid, desolate spot for the first and last time. Feisal, simple and charming, asking questions regarding affairs in Mesopotamia more out of courtesy to his guest than with a real desire to know more than that the Turks were being well beaten. Lawrence, in full Arab robes, richly embroidered, a gold dagger at his waist, speaking as softly as Feisal, carefully choosing his words and then lapsing into long silences. Leachman, clothed in faded khaki, inscrutable, with that

puzzling smile of his lurking at the corners of his mouth, but straightforward and decisive in speech. The contrast between the two Englishmen was patent : Lawrence, acting the Arab and maintaining his prestige through the medium of his magnificent clothes. His servility to Feisal and his seeming unreality form a picture which still lingers in my mind.

Leachman on the other hand was so obviously and unashamedly the Englishman, and a masterful one. His sufferings and hardships were mapped on his lean visage and pride showed behind the curtains of his eyes. He had endured five years of toil and danger, and three more still harsher years were in store for him. The other two had undergone a few months of rough campaigning, and their total experience was to last but another fifteen months.

All three are dead now, but while of the edifice the first two built not one vestige remains, the work the other accomplished endures to-day and will endure. Whereas all the world outside Arabia has heard of Lawrence ; yet by a strange trick of fate, comparatively few Arabs have heard that name, yet the name of Leachman is still borne by countless sons of a warrior people and among them is still the synonym for gallantry and loyalty.

Leachman, being nothing but a stern realist, had small use for the ephemeral ideas which had just been communicated to him and he dismissed the whole Arab venture in the west as of little worth. Whether he was right or wrong only the future historian can say, I merely faithfully give his views. He took no pains to hide from me his disappointment at what he had seen and heard during his visit to the Red Sea coast and expressed a keen desire to get back to what he called " men's work " in Mesopotamia. In

spite of the luxury of Cairo he longed to get into contact with his unruly "parishioners," as he called them, and with small regret he left Cairo on May 20 on his return journey.

On May 24 he reached Aden and found time to send a brief letter home which between the lines clearly showed his disgust :

"I have got so far on my return journey, having had a delightful voyage on a man-of-war. I shall be a week in India as I have some things to do, and then back to Mesopot. and very pleased I shall be to get there. I wish I had never left it. I hope I shall recover from my delicacy there, which I have not so far. I am afraid there is no news I can tell you. My movements and doings are not of interest to the public. I fancy Jack must be in Egypt from what I hear."

After spending a short time in India Leachman returned to Mesopotamia in the middle of June and reached Baghdad about July 1. He travelled up the river on his launch so as to regain touch with the different Arab sheikhs with whom he had dealt during the strenuous days when he was co-operating with the troops.

We now have two instances of how jealously Leachman guarded his prestige with the Arabs. He never forgot an injury done to himself, whether it was material, as when his pony was stolen by an Arab during the confusion which followed the battle of Ctesiphon, or moral, as when in 1910 he took refuge with the Anaiza and Fahed Bey had treated him with great incivility. He considered it of vital importance both for his own safety and honour and for the "good of the show" that no Arab should for long think he was the better man or had scored off

him. The methods he adopted to redress the two grievances we have mentioned are instructive as showing the deep insight he had into Arab character and his retentive memory, and the pains he must have taken to find out who had stolen his pony.

Writing from Baghdad on July 5 he himself described the first instance :

“ At last you see me in the beloved city. I had a pleasant journey up in my own beautiful launch, which I managed to do a junior officer out of for the occasion. I saw many old friends who were good enough to say that they had missed ‘Lijman.’ I expect, however, they were quite happy to see me pass on and remove my severe hand from their neighbourhood. I found Baghdad very changed with new roads and nastier people, the first made before our occupation and the second as the result of it.

“ The first thing that happened was pleasing. You may remember that after the battle of Ctesiphon I lost a very fine horse. I knew who had stolen it, and the first person that I met in Baghdad was the offender. He nearly had a fit, and when I suggested that he had come to Baghdad to return my horse, swore that he had no idea where the horse was, and that surely I had punished him enough by killing seventy of his Arabs. The latter was a fact as I got Townshend to send out some cavalry to the camp which was not far off and we exacted payment in dead ‘uns. I, however, was unrelenting, and the result was that after a day or two the horse suddenly appeared. He was almost unmanageable after his stay with the Arabs, but I can put that right. The only fly in the ointment is that I stuck Government for the sum of fifty pounds as compensation, and

I have to give it back, which is hard in these times. My trip to Egypt cost a lot, and they cut me some of my pay for it, under the impression, I presume, that Shepheard's Hotel is cheaper living than the desert.

"When I arrived here they did not seem quite sure what they were going to do with me, so I proceeded to instal myself in a house. That settled it, however, at once, as the day I had settled in, they ordered me out into the desert. It really is very unfortunate that they think that the limit of my capabilities is to wander about in the desert with Bedouin or else take an active part in military operations. I am going out to more old friends of mine. Do you remember in the course of my first journey in Arabia I came in for a big fight in which the side I was on were beaten? I am going to the people who were beaten on that occasion. The old sheikh treated me rather badly formerly, and when I saw him this time he crawled to me as is the habit of the noble Arab when he wants anything. I then asked him if he did not know me, and that I was Leachman. He then I thought chose the best course and apologized for his former bad behaviour and suggested that I should subsidize him to the tune of £100 a month.

"I hope to be able to get into Baghdad occasionally for it is a bit hard that when the whole force is eating beautiful fruit, and drinking iced drinks that I should have to live in the desert. . . . I am afraid I shall be unable to write for a bit as I shall be out of touch with civilization."

He left straightway for the Anaiza camp which then lay at Abu Dibbis on the way to Shithatha, forty miles west of Karbela, which he now made his

headquarters. He was to resume the difficult work he had been carrying out just previous to his visit to Cairo. He was now to operate further to the north and west. It may, indeed, be said with justice that his new province was the whole western desert almost up to the walls of Damascus and as far north as the Sinjar mountains.

It was imperative that he should enlist new allies to help him keep the peace in this vast area, where turbulence was general and increased by the fact that British arms and ammunitions were pouring in from the Hedjaz side. There thousands upon thousands of rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition were supplied to Feisal to arm his tribesmen to fight the Turk, instead of which no sooner were they handed out than a large proportion of them at once found their way to the Mesopotamian area and were employed in fighting the British.¹

This fact made the task of the British occupying the country far more difficult and increased Leachman's responsibilities enormously. He decided, therefore, to accept the help of the Anaiza who could muster at least 15,000 fighting men. He had, however, to make very sure that his new allies would be loyal and that they would obey him implicitly.

What happened when he reached the Anaiza camp shall be told in Fahed Bey's own words :

" When I offered my services to the British Government, the late General Maude deputed Colonel Leachman to stay with us in the desert in order to watch things at close quarters and ascertain our loyalty to the Government.

¹ " We suffered, however, from the lavish distribution of rifles and ammunition to the Arab forces co-operating on General Allenby's flank. Such rifles were on sale in Mesopotamia within a short time after their issue on the other side of Arabia, and of ammunition there seemed an endless supply, often in full boxes, which, like the rifles, we could identify as having passed through the hands of 'Egyforce.'"—*Mesopotamia, 1917-1920*, p. 79, by Lieut.-Col. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, K.C.I.E.

"For three days after his arrival at our camp the Colonel did not utter a word with us, his purpose being to watch and observe our services. Just at that time we heard that a merchant's caravan had left Karbela carrying goods to the Turks, and having eventually confiscated this caravan, we delivered it to Colonel Leachman. This set his heart at ease as to our friendship to the British Government, and since that time we carried out similar duties and many consignments to the Turks were held up.

"After three days he set out at the head of thirty camel riders and ten horsemen with one of our chiefs and explored the desert for a fortnight, riding a camel. On his return he went off alone to Najaf."

It may be mentioned that during this fortnight Leachman, travelling at amazing speed, reached half-way to Hail. With the enrolment of this powerful tribe among his friends, Leachman set about the second phase of his desert work in earnest.

The time has now come to give a more detailed sketch of Leachman as he appeared among and to the Arabs, and to his British friends when chance brought them face to face with him when engaged in his work. He never paraded himself in Arab dress before his countrymen, but would change into his faded khaki the moment he reached the borders of civilization, so that few had the privilege of witnessing the remarkable transformation from the long, lanky, British officer, always beautifully clean, always fastidious, into a wild-looking Bedouin so perfect in disguise that not even his closest friends could penetrate it.

It was during the performance of his work just previous to his departure for Cairo that he became known to the whole army as "O.C. Desert."

It was Candler, the official eye-witness in Mesopotamia, who first gave Leachman this name and who said of him that he was one of the few people who could pass as an Arab. How true was this observation will be shown later, for he could do more than pass as an Arab, he could live with them for long periods without having his identity discovered.

He used this fact to find out personally who were the culprits of a particular misdemeanour. If he suspected that certain Arabs were robbing or raiding, or were in touch with the Turks, he used to disguise himself and live with them, and even take part in their raids or misdemeanours. When they had planned some important coup, of which, of course, as one of them, he was fully aware, he would slip away, gather his own Arabs, and, catching the marauders in the act, he would attack them ruthlessly and inflict upon them the severest punishment.

In this manner a fear possessed the unruly, which on occasion developed into terror because no one could account for the amazing manner in which he always appeared at the psychological, and, for the lawless, most inconvenient moment. The sequel to these appearances, too, was appalling, for not only did they invariably lose several killed, on occasions even hundreds, but their rifles were confiscated, fines imposed, and in flagrant cases the leaders suffered the indignity of a beating before their followers. Yet Leachman never committed an injustice and never punished unnecessarily.

By now Leachman's name was a talisman throughout Arabia. If anyone was in trouble, or lost, the mere mention of his name was sufficient to bring them relief. Every airman had his name written in English and Arabic, pasted into his machine in case of a forced landing. Every soldier in Mesopotamia knew him, or of him, and loved him, and he became a

legendary figure throughout the force. He was welcome everywhere, both among the Arabs and the British, even as he welcomed everyone.

Of course Leachman had his enemies, especially among the Arabs, but considering the range and nature of his activities they were remarkably few. I well remember how small I felt when I had been entertaining at Karbela an Arab sheikh from the south whom I received with honour and hospitality. When I informed Leachman of it, he said, "Oh ! yes, that is the fellow who tried to kill me and shot at me from a range of ten yards. Of course he missed me, the silly fool."

This sheikh, whose photograph I have, but whose name I unfortunately forget, was greatly respected by the political officers of his district. No one had the slightest idea that he had attempted Leachman's life, and, except for this chance remark, the fact would never have become known.

It was characteristic of Leachman, too, not to influence the political officer against his assailant. He disdained to employ a cheap mode of revenge. He would and did, himself, requite an injury, and with interest ; but he was not vindictive. His mind was too large for pettiness in any form.

One of the chief reasons for the honour with which he was held among the Bedouin tribes was his extreme simplicity and total absence of ostentation. It would have seemed natural for him to have dressed himself like a prince and gone about on his dangerous missions with a strong bodyguard, for, as we have said, there was a heavy price on his head. Yet his Arab dress was of the simplest and except when he personally led his friends in action he roamed the country with no companion save his servant Hassan and, on frequent occasions, quite alone.

Khidr Ibn Abbas, Leachman's companion on his 1910 trip and his agent from 1917 to 1920, gives the following character sketch of him as judged by a simple Arab :

"Colonel Leachman was hot-tempered, especially to those who showed anti-British tendencies. But he looked to those who were friendly to his government with great respect and overlooked all their faults. He was quick to treat kindly those with whom he had been angry. . . . He was an expert horseman and was never tired of riding even if it continued for days. He was very fond of camel riding and had a thorough knowledge of places in the Arabian Peninsula. If necessary he would show the guide the way. . . .

"He was very loyal and sincere to his government and would go on any adventure that was in its interests even if it cost him his life. . . . He would exert all his efforts to obtain an amnesty for those whom he knew sincerely repented of brigandage . . . he exhibited much bravery. . . . As for his liberality and generosity, I might just as well speak of the ocean. He would treat his guests with an even greater hospitality than the tribal chiefs extended. . . . A stranger could not tell he was an Englishman. . . . Colonel Leachman's soldierly attributes and his fine achievements cannot be dealt with in this brief account and therefore I may conclude by bearing witness to his honesty and gallantry and his self-effacement for his country's sake.

"(Signed) Khidr Ibn Abbas,
"Abn Turaichiyah."

Such appreciations of the "O.C. Desert" could be multiplied a hundredfold but these which have been

given perhaps bear sufficient witness to his greatness, his simplicity ; his daring, his modesty and his shyness ; his violence and his charity and to the glamour which surrounded him, so that for generations to come the Arabs will still tell tales of his prowess. I have yet to give some actual examples of the manner in which he worked and dealt with dangerous situations. These appear in the succeeding chapters. Their authenticity cannot be doubted. Chance circumstances which brought witnesses to the spot enables them to be included in this volume. They have all already been published, but they are retold here so as to complete as far as possible the life story of their hero.

CHAPTER XX

"O.C. THE DESERT"¹

CAPTAIN CHALMERS was sitting in his brick-walled room in the *serai* at Kufa, on the Euphrates.

He had occasion to check his men for killing some pigeons contrary to Army Orders, since these birds were sacred to the Shias. Then going out on the river bank he measured for carrying capacity some *mahelas*—large native boats—which had just been commandeered. As he was winding up the tape line he saw the tall figure of Colonel Leachman, Political Officer, Desert, coming towards him, his cap in his hand, his somewhat carrotty head bent in a profound study.

"I say, Colonel," Captain Chalmers said, "I'm afraid my men have been killing these infernal pigeons. The stupid creatures flock among their feet and simply ask to be put in the pot. Fellows on eternal corn-beef and hard biscuits can't stand that sort of temptation every minute. Besides, why should they be compelled to kow-tow to a silly Arab superstition at the expense of their stomachs?"

A quiet smile spread over Leachman's clean-shaven face. He caught hold of Captain Chalmers's arm and drew him with him.

"The Arabs," he said, "have a story they firmly believe; it is said that those birds convey their own punishment to the infidel who slay and eats them; their flesh is deadly poisonous."

"If that's all," the captain answered, "I've a

¹ Compiled from an article by Captain I. Chalmers, published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, by the kind permission of the publishers.



O. C THE DESERT

bunch of infidels who'll soon prove that yarn to be a washout."

He led him into an Arab house, next door to a noisy native coffee shop. It was a sort of rest-house for unattached officials, and Colonel Leachman, known as "O.C. the Desert," was always on his own.

With his back against the wall he stretched his legs along a wooden form.

"Have you found all the sheikhs implicated in the murder of Captain Marshall?" Captain Chalmers asked.

"Yes. I think we have."

"It must have been pretty tough going out in the blue hunting up the missing ones."

"So, so."

Captain Chalmers knew he would not tell him anything about his search. It was doubtful whether he ever told much to anyone of the hardships and dangers of his lonely treks through these vast seas of sand.

"A story was wafted here the other day," he said, "that you had been fired at by an Arab rascal hiding among pomegranate trees near Musaiyib, that you rode at him while he was having another pot at you, and after cuffing his ears gave him a brotherly scolding."

Leachman smiled.

"If you had brought that fellow in he would have had to face a firing squad."

"Yes. Poor devil. I expect he has reformed now."

He sprang up from his stool.

"Jove! I've got some cider."

He dug into his kit-bag.

"Cider!" Captain Chalmers exclaimed. "Good heavens, I haven't even heard the word for years. You're dreaming, sir."

Leachman placed two bottles on the form.

"What's that?"

Yes, it looked like cider all right, but Captain Chalmers would not be really certain until he had drunk some of it from an enamelled mug Leachman had handed him, while he himself drank from the bottle.

After a little Captain Chalmers rose to go.

"Thanks so much for the treat."

"Take some with you," Leachman said, and dipping into the bag again he produced two more bottles.

"Take these."

"No, thanks, I mustn't deprive you," said Captain Chalmers. He looked frankly into the kit-bag. "I knew it," he said, "You've no more left."

"That does not matter; I'm off into the desert in a few minutes and they'd only be in the way."

"But they'll keep here until you turn up again."

"Do take them."

Knowing that his offer was laden with a bashful generosity, Captain Chalmers made no more fuss and left him, the bottles jingling in his pocket.

Two days later word was brought in to Captain Chalmers by a friendly Arab that a *mahela*, laden with kerosene oil and some benzine, had sprung a leak and sunk down river about ten miles from Kufa. She was one of a convoy of four *mahelas*, the other three carrying foodstuffs.

Taking men in an empty *mahela* he started off to the scene of the wreck. He came upon her, lying close to the right bank, only a small part of her bow visible above the water and her guard of three Punjabis and the Arab crew sitting disconsolately on the bank. The other three vessels lay in line astern downstream, the last one about three hundred yards away.

While he was engaged in the task of transferring the

cargo from the wreck, suddenly an Arab, mounted on a grey horse, appeared at the top of the bank. They could not see him until he was right above them, and it was only then, too, that he could see them. Captain Chalmers hurriedly told his interpreter, an Egyptian, to call to the man to dismount and advance; but no sooner had the interpreter's voice reached the stranger than he swung his horse round and, digging his heels into its flanks, disappeared.

They ran up the bank and sent a volley of rifle-fire after him, high for a start. But the guards on the other *mahelas*, seeing what was happening, rushed up the bank and gave the fleeing man direct fire. Ahead of the horseman was a deep, dried canal curving in towards the river, upstream. He could only make a detour to the left, in the downstream direction. This meant his having to ride across the somewhat extensive front, which was impossible now that all their bullets were pinging round him in earnest. The horseman turned right about and the firing ceased. With his hands raised he galloped up to them and dismounted.

"Why did you not do this at first?" Captain Chalmers asked through the interpreter.

The man made no reply. He was a tall dark fellow, lithe and wiry, wearing a finer *aba* than that worn by the working Arab, his *chefee* was white and large, coming down over his brow, and the *akal* was the coloured hair type which usually adorns the heads of minor sheikhs. He had a black beard and moustache, and his eyes, as he gazed at Captain Chalmers, had a proud fiery glint in them.

"Ask him his name."

"Abdul Ibn Kerim, of the Beni Fik tribe," came the answer.

"Where are the tents of your kinsmen?"

"Near Mufraz."

"That's three to four days' march away. What are you doing here alone?"

"I am on a pilgrimage to the sacred relics of Najaf."

"As a peaceful pilgrim you have a pass?"

The man fumbled in a broad camel-haired belt threaded with faded gold which he wore inside his *aba* and produced a scrap of paper torn roughly from a small pocket-book. On it was scrawled, "Permit Abdul Ibn Kerim, Sheikh of the Beni Fik tribe, to pass unhindered," signed something Leachman, Col., P.O., Desert.

Captain Chalmers did not know Leachman's initials, and the first letters, hastily scribbled, did not help him. But all the writing was undoubtedly Leachman's and it was just like him hurriedly to tear a sheet out of a note-book. An honest man in the possession of this document was as safe as a church mouse.

"Why didn't you show this at once?"

"Because I was afraid you would take it from me and I wanted it for Najaf, where your army is very strict."

That seemed half an explanation at any rate, for owing to recent disturbances at Najaf a keen scrutiny of all who passed in and out was taking place, and the ever suspicious Arab might fear that the first officer he met would take the pass from him and so prevent him from reaching his destination.

Half explanations, though, do not satisfy; they often do not fit the special case. Several friendly Arab convoys, as well as some of our own provision convoys, had been held up by a gang of marauding Arabs, and these Arabs, after their raid, had always disappeared so fast that up to the present no one had been able to get at them. It was possible that this man was one of the bandit's scouts. Recently

provisions had been arriving safely, as armed guards had been placed on the *mahelas*. But it was hoped to get hold of the raiders and so settle the district and do away with the guards, as they were a considerable drain on the different regiments from which they were drawn. Captain Chalmers looked at the date on the pass, but it might have been any date so far as he could decipher it.

"You may have stolen this from another Arab," he said, putting the chit in his pocket; "you'll remain a prisoner."

The man flashed an angry look at him. A soldier searched him and found an old muzzle-loading pistol.

Having completed the transfer of the cargo, the party started to make tea on shore and eat some of the food they had brought with them. Captain Chalmers offered some food to his prisoner.

He made a haughty gesture of refusal with his hands and gave him a searching look.

He produced from the folds of his inner clothing a *hobous*, a large coarse Arab pancake, and a hunk of soft white cheese made of goat's milk. After he had consumed this, he asked the interpreter to get Captain Chalmers's permission to move from his place in order to drink some water from the river.

Captain Chalmers offered him a drink of the cider which had been given him by Leachman but he indignantly refused.

He stepped out and, bending over the river, scooped some water up into his mouth with a cupped hand. His surly conduct and haughty demeanour angered Captain Chalmers, who judged him to be an Arab of the fanatical Shia persuasion. He felt that he would be delighted to hand him over to the Political Officer at Kufa.

As they were finishing their meal a *mahela*, its great lateen-like sail spread, swung round the bend

and sailed down the reach. Several Arabs sat at the bow and an Arab held the tiller, while to windward, on what seemed a temporary deck, sat a white lady wearing a light blue dress. This was Miss Gertrude Bell, and she drew up alongside.

"Have you been having trouble?" she asked.

"No, only a sunken *mahela*. But I've a queer fish here who, while in possession of a pass from Colonel Leachman, galloped off when told to advance. I had to bring him back with rifle fire."

Captain Chalmers handed her Leachman's chit. She read it. "It seems all right," she said.

She spoke to the man in Arabic. He had been squatting more or less since he had been taken prisoner, but he stood up straight when she addressed him, although he made no answer.

She spoke to him again. No answer. After gazing at him thoughtfully for a moment, she said: "I'm going into the tribal histories of the Arabs and have a list of most of the tribes with me."

She went into a little cabin that had been apparently recently constructed for her in the stern of the *mahela* and came out turning over the leaves of a large exercise book.

"No," she said at last, "I see no mention of the Beni Fik. They may, of course, be a small tribe under the protection of a powerful one, such as the Beni Said or the Muntafik."

"Ah, well," said Captain Chalmers, "I'll take him to Kufa. Perhaps he'll be more inclined to open his mouth when Balfour gets his monocled eye on him."

He held up his remaining bottle of cider. "Cider. Would you like it?"

"Heavens! Cider here?"

"Yes, and the very best Devon. Got it from Leachman."

"Colonel Leachman. Have you any idea where he is?"

"No. He passed through Kufa two days ago and pushed on. You must have this." She refused at first, but after a little persuasion gave in. Expecting to make Abu Sukar about sunset, Miss Bell carried on downstream.

It would have been no hardship to the Arab's horse to have left it to find its way to the first Arab encampment, where it would have been immediately taken possession of and well cared for, but Captain Chalmers was anxious to take it with him, as the marking on it, the quality of the saddlery, even the pieces of plaited hair with which the rusty bit was secured to the bridle, might serve as a means of proving or disproving Abdul Ibn Kerim's bona fides. So by dint of raising some of the cases into a pile and levelling off space the horse was got on board.

As night set in the man's hands were fastened together and lashed to a thwart. This would effectually prevent him from jumping into the water and, swimming underneath it, escaping in the darkness. There had been various cases of powerful Arabs, handcuffed, gaining their liberty by this means.

After four hours of stiff towing from the river bank against the current, they stopped to give the ten Arab boatmen a rest. The soldiers, restless without their smoke, took advantage of the halt to hurry on shore. Only a Punjabi sentry sat in the cramped space of the bow with his rifle across his knees, his eyes on the prisoner.

Following the men's example Captain Chalmers got up and, rummaging in his pocket for his pipe and tobacco, was about to step ashore from alongside where the prisoner sat.

"I say, old man, you must let me go."

He looked down astounded. The prisoner's sharp guttural Arabic had turned into smooth cultured English!

He stared into his face. "Who the devil are you?"

"Leachman."

"Leachman. Good heavens! Yes! But it's only your tongue that gives you away. What's the game?"

"Whisper, man. Squat down and pretend that you're making certain that the rope you've secured me with is not likely to come adrift. I was right on the track of the Budoos who are holding up the convoys. Your rifle fire frightened them away."

"Do they know I've got you?"

"They think you've got one of their own men, because I came out from the pack to reconnoitre, though I didn't expect to find you. They're all outcasts from different tribes and are led by a disgruntled sheikh. I must get away at once, for there was talk of looting an Arab camel convoy crossing from Karbela to Najaf. I want to round up some friendly tribesmen and be along in time to queer their game. Don't let a soul know you've seen me. News goes through the desert like wild-fire, and if the raiders know I'm in the vicinity, I might lose my chance of getting them this time."

"How are you off for tucker?" he asked.

"Thanks, plenty. I can always forage. I could have done, though, with a little of that bottle of cider you gave Miss Bell."

Reflecting on his indignant treatment to his offers, Captain Chalmers smiled.

"You're a good actor."

"I'm not so sure," he answered. "There's always the fear of giving oneself away."

"I couldn't help firing at you. I had to let the

Arab I took you to be understand that I meant business."

"Don't worry about that. I've dodged bullets from my own side before. Now I must be off. Leave no doubt but what I'm a genuine Arab."

Captain Chalmers called his interpreter and a soldier.

"Take the rope off this man," he said.

A minute, later Leachman stood up, shook and stretched himself.

Captain Chalmers turned to the interpreter. "Tell Abdul Ibn Kerim, sheikh of the Beni Fik, that I've been watching him carefully, and now remember seeing him when he declared his loyalty and homage to British rule to Captain Balfour, the Political Officer at Kufa. When you've told him that, ask him how long ago that was."

"Two days ago," answered the interpreter for the sheikh.

"Yes, that's right. Now tell him that the next time a British officer orders him to approach he must immediately do so."

This the interpreter did.

"As he is on a pilgrimage to Najaf, tell him he ought to be grateful to us for bringing him a considerable portion of the way, resting both him and his horse."

The interpreter conveyed the sheikh's gratitude to him.

Captain Chalmers handed back the old muzzle-loading pistol.

"All right, let him go."

The interpreter waved his hand towards the shore, and Leachman catching hold of his horse's reins, jumped the animal on to the land and, climbing to the top of the bank, mounted. He started at a canter, his wide *aba* flapping and soon disappeared into the night.

CHAPTER XXI

O.C. THE DESERT—*continued.*

PERHAPS a chance eye-witness, unknown to himself, saw him in action, as was the case with Lieut. Col. J. E. Tennant, who makes the following reference to him in his book, *The Clouds above Baghdad*.

“It was my fortune once to witness from the air a battle of one tribe against another, to the north of the Suwaiqiya Marsh, a side show quite apart from the Turks or British. But it was an Englishman who led one side, one Englishman alone leading a wild savage tribe into fierce combat on our right flank. The career of this Englishman may never be written, yet in the history of the world, there is probably no romance that can equal it.”

That Englishman was Leachman who

“Lived in that desert from January to December, dressed as an Arab and with his boy Hassan wandered about amongst the tribes, perhaps even behind the Turks, organizing, compelling, acquiring priceless information.

“There was a price on his head, and he lived with his life in his hands, but he could shoot a tribesman dead for misdeeds in front of the tribe and no hand would be lifted against him.”

Although the Life of Leachman has now been written, I can make no claim that it is anything but imperfect and incomplete.

Many amazing stories are still told over the camp-fires of the deeds of this remarkable man. Some are obviously fantastic, others, almost incredible, verge on the possible but cannot, without corroboration, be included in this volume. Yet Leachman did often achieve the seemingly impossible, so, apart from the material collected for his biography, it is quite obvious that he performed other most astonishing deeds. As Colonel Tennant rightly says, there is probably no romance in the history of the world which could equal the full story of his achievements.

Fahed Bey before he died wrote a short account of Leachman's activities with his tribe, an extract of which is given below, but although Leachman worked a great deal with the Anaiza, they were by no means the only Arab friends he employed; so that Fahed Bey's brief résumé of their work together only provides us with a glimpse of its full extent. He used the Anaiza chiefly for work in the desert proper, and mainly to deal with other Bedouin tribes such as the Shammar to whom reference has already been made. If the reader will refer to the frontispiece map, he cannot fail to be impressed by the extent of country Leachman covered in the course of his expeditions with this tribe alone; for they embraced an area 500 miles from north to south and 400 miles from east to west. That is to say from half-way to Hail in the south to the Jebel Sinjar in the north, and from Karbela on the east to within eighty miles of Damascus on the west!

Fahed Bey's report is as follows:

"After staying a while in Baghdad, Colonel Leachman returned to take 120 of our horsemen, led by one of my sons, and made for Al Latif, a well in the desert, two days' journey from Najaf. There they encountered a caravan of Ageyl carry-

ing goods from Samawa to the Turks. He attacked them at the head of our horsemen and succeeded in capturing them with their goods. He then went to Baghdad pleased. Sometime later Atiyah Abu Gulal, Chief of Najaf, revolted and killed the Political Officer of Najaf and escaped to the Shawiya, whom he roused and induced to oppose the Government. The Colonel ordered my son Mutib to attack them. Our son at the head of ten thousand men, accompanied by Colonel Leachman, attacked and defeated them and killed six hundred of their men—thanks to Colonel Leachman's personal leadership.

"Atiyah, seeing that the fight was going against him, fled away on horseback and sought the protection of the Political Officer of Shinafiya. After the raid Colonel Leachman proceeded to Baghdad.

"On his return he remarked that he wished to attack Ajaimi Al Sa'dun [the powerful and able sheikh of the Muntafik, who was a constant thorn in the side of the British authorities—he was utterly anti-British]—with whom he was at enmity.

"He was a continual cause of serious trouble. An expedition of thousands of our fighting men of the Anaiza was soon mustered and led by Colonel Leachman and my son Mutib, set out to attack and capture Ajaimi, who had fled away and entered the Jebel Sinjar. Heat and fatigue played havoc with our camels and horses. The expedition pursued Ajaimi for over a month. He had a long start, unfortunately, and Leachman, although at one time close on his heels, never got within actual striking distance of him. Finally exhaustion forced the abandon-

ment of the chase and Ajaimi crossed the river and joined the Turks. He was prevented, however, from returning while the war lasted.

"After these raids the Colonel was made the Political Officer of the Dulaim. He again ordered my son Mutib to raid the Shammar, another powerful and pro-Turkish Bedouin tribe, which they successfully accomplished together and killed a number of them."

"My son Mutib died soon afterwards and Colonel Leachman was also transferred to the governorship of Mosul. Orders came from him to my son Mahrut to raid the Shammar. Mahrut raided them and crossed the river near Dair-Az-Zor which was then in British occupation. When Mahrut was in pursuit Colonel Leachman reconnoitred in an aeroplane and finding that the Shammar were in full flight and that they had entered Turkish territory, he ordered Mahrut to return."

Fahed Bey in the above brief narrative deems it worth while only to recall Leachman's major expeditions. He, however, frequently called on the Bey to supply him with comparatively small bodies of from one to two hundred men, to waylay raiders, principally those from the northern Shammar and others who were in Turkish pay, but whom he kept in a state of virtual inactivity. The Turks did their utmost to get the Shammar to attack the British communications and make raids for the collection of supplies ; but so well was Leachman informed and so rapid and unexpected were his movements, so devastating his action, that they reported to the Turks that any serious results were entirely out of the question ; nor could Turkish bribes or threats cajole or force them to greater endeavours.

On camel, on horseback, or in his Dodge car, which he drove at a reckless speed all over the desert, and which came to be as well recognized as its owner, he travelled from Mosul to Najaf and over the whole western desert, covering in all thousands of miles.

Knowing the desert as well as, or as Fahed Bey stated, better than the Arabs themselves he could foretell with certainty the point for which his enemies were making, so that, with the exception of the arduous and fruitless pursuit of Ajaimi, he wasted no time in trying to locate them, but struck instantly and effectively. Having accomplished his task, he returned with equal speed to his interrupted and normal duties, which he would resume as if he had never been away. Indeed, he had a queer way of often continuing a discussion at the point where he had last abandoned it some days, or even weeks, previously.

I was sitting one morning in my office in Karbela when he rushed in unceremoniously and burst out in a rage, "Why the blazes can't you govern your town in a proper manner?" "What's happened!" I asked. "I came back dead beat," he replied, "I tried to sleep, and I was kept awake by some ghastly orgy going on across the street. It's that dreadful young pimp. . . . He had a lot of screeching women there—it's time that fellow was dropped on and now I've got to go off again and I've had no rest," he ended petulantly. "I will look into it," I said. "I hope you will and give that youth hell," he answered, and left the room abruptly.

Through my police officer I made discreet inquiries and found that it had been a debauch of the worst kind, accompanied by unbelievable licentiousness. Such behaviour could not be countenanced. I imprisoned the youth for a fortnight. Ten days later Leachman, looking haggard and pinched, again

strolled into my office. "You *are* a cruel beggar," he said. "Why what have I done?" I asked. "I hear that you imprisoned that youth who disturbed me the other night and that he is shovelling dung in the streets. I'm sorry I got him into trouble. What about releasing him?"

Leachman had been back less than an hour, he had immediately made inquiry into the effect of his complaint; he was informed of the results and he regretted his rage, and had come post-haste to try to mitigate its effects. One would have thought that he could have afforded himself the luxury of a short rest before making his inquiries, but, on the contrary, his high standard of justice would not permit him to waste an instant in easing his mind from the fear that he might have been too hasty.

Shortly afterwards he was transferred to Mosul, but he still kept strict control of the Bedouin Arabs in the western desert. They soon found that, although he was in mileage far removed from them, their misdemeanours were still visited with instant retribution. As Sheikh Jiza'a of the Amarat Anaiza found to his cost.

Karbela and Najaf, the two Shia shrines, are joined by a dusty cart track, running in an almost straight line for the forty miles which separate these two cities.

The track marks the boundary between desert and tillage. From its western edge, the desert, here covered with a coarse scrub intermingled with camel-thorn, stretches away to the far horizon in monotonous undulations. From its eastern edge rich fields of wheat and barley, and extensive pasture lands carpet a level plain, whose flatness is only broken by the high banks of the canals, which, from a distance, look like ridges of rugged hills. The hamlets of the settled Arabs are sprinkled liberally amongst

the cornfields, and emphasize the extent of the canal system, and the richness of the soil.

The road is then a frontier line between the wandering Bedouin, living their lives of hardship, privation, want and danger, and their more fortunate brethren, the Husseinis, who, having abandoned a life of hazard, were now comparatively affluent and comfortable.

The nomad tribes move to different pastures according to the season of the year and the condition of the grazing in different localities; so now the black tents of the Anaiza bordered the road.

Leachman had decreed that they should not cross that narrow strip, and, in order to see that his injunction was obeyed, had a few Shabana patrolling the road. He then went off to Mosul and ordered me to report any untoward happening.

One day a shepherd of the Husseinis was grazing his black sheep close to the road's edge, when a sheep, tempted by a tuft of grass on the other side, crossed the road to eat it, to be at once pounced upon by one of the tribesmen. The ensuing scuffle at once attracted the shepherd's attention, and he rushed at the Bedouin, his staff uplifted and shrieking at him to release the captive.

The Bedouin, dragging the kicking sheep by one leg, shouted in return :

"By God, if what is on the other side is yours that which is on this side is ours," and he called to witness those of his clansmen who, at the clamour, swarmed out of their tents to his aid, some carrying rifles, others snatching their daggers from their belts.

The shepherd, finding himself powerless to retrieve his property in the face of the menacing attitude of these wolves, looked round desperately for help. By chance a Shabana was passing, and to him he made complaint. The Shabana, in the name of the Govern-

ment, sternly ordered that the sheep should be restored. He was met with jeers and abuse, so he dug his heels into his horse, to urge it forward to scatter the crowd, and the beast had hardly advanced a step when one of the tribesmen raised his rifle and shot its rider dead. There one hour later I saw him, stretched upon the dusty road as he had fallen, no man having touched him.

I made inquiry, and found this part of the Arab encampment consisted of a section of the Anaiza under Jiza'a, a stoutish, bearded, middle-aged man of surly aspect. I demanded the culprit. He replied that judgment lay in the hands of Fahed Bey, his paramount chief, and the latter was, I knew, far away.

I therefore returned to Karbela and telegraphed details of the affair to Leachman. I received an immediate answer :

"Tell Jiza'a to remove his tribe seven days' journey into the desert."

I at once despatched this order to Jiza'a, who as speedily replied :

"In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate, Fahed Bey I know. Who is Lachmun?"

I telegraphed this reply to Leachman with relish. If I knew my man, Jiza'a was in for trouble and I was intrigued to know just how Leachman would deal with the situation. Back came his reply :

"Tell Jiza'a that if he is not gone by six o'clock to-morrow morning, I will send aeroplanes to bomb him."

Once more my messenger set out, to bring back the following message, one word less brief than his former one :

"Ibn Hadhal (Fahed Bey) I know. Lachmun I know not."

In a few hours this message was in Leachman's hands, and early in the afternoon he telegraphed :

" Picquet Jiza'a. I am arriving before dawn tomorrow with six armoured cars. Please have breakfast for crews."

The last sentence was typical of Leachman's kindly forethought for those under his command.

Amin Bey and I rode forth in the late afternoon and, concealed behind some scrub, watched Jiza'a's encampment through our glasses. We wondered whether he would brazen it out, and, if so, how Leachman would deal with the guilty without including the innocent in his punishment.

When we came in view of the camp it was peaceful-looking and lacked any sign of commotion, and remained thus till sunset.

Suddenly there was a bustle in the camp, camels were being driven in, tents hastily lowered, while we could see the womenfolk hurrying over tasks, indistinguishable in the gloom.

Jiza'a's nerve had broken, and he was fleeing from the man he said he did not know.

In a remarkably short space of time the tribe was on the move. Amin and I mounted, and, making a wide detour, kept them in view with difficulty, for it was just at that time between dusk and nightfall when the gloom was deepest. We rode on a flank so as not to stumble upon stragglers, and followed more by sound than vision. Thus we travelled for about twelve miles, when we could see indistinctly to our left front, a black lump, it might be a hill or a large mound, for which the Bedouin were evidently making. We circled it and to our surprise they did not come down the far side, where at a distance we awaited them. After an interval a couple of fires twinkled in the distance, and we knew that they had halted for the night.

We both knew this flat-topped hill on the road to Shithatha, so we rode back eastward to Karbela at

first at a slow walk, and talking in whispers so as not to betray ourselves, then later at a gallop.

At five o'clock next morning Leachman reached Karbela in his Dodge car, six Rolls Royce armoured cars and a Ford van following in his wake.

The town was still asleep, when after a hurried breakfast, Leachman asked me to join him in his car, and we started for Jiza'a's encampment.

We made a great clatter as we crossed the long stone bridge on the outskirts of Karbela, and hardly less when upon the desert proper, so that I doubted surprise and expected that Jiza'a would be fully prepared for us or in flight.

About half-way a serious mishap befell us. A deep wadi filled with loose sand crossed our front, and here in spite of all our efforts four of the six armoured cars stuck fast. Time was of vital necessity, so Leachman pushed forward with the remaining two as fast as possible. He had timed the venture to a nicety, for just as day was dawning we saw Jiza'a's encampment on the hill before us.

Once more six hundred yards from the mound, for it was in reality nothing more, another wadi barred our way, and Leachman, not wishing to risk the remaining two cars in its treacherous softness, ordered them to halt on its edge, and be prepared for anything.

He himself went in his car at full speed towards the camp, and halted within twenty yards of it.

His orders to the officer in charge of the cars had been delivered with the rapidity of pistol shots, and his own action was amazing in its methodical swiftness. So when he halted his car with its three unarmed occupants—for he had a tribesman with him—on the very edge of the encampment, but a few seconds had elapsed, and the camp was so silent that I thought it was deserted.

Leachman jumped out,

"Go sceek Jiza'a," he snapped at the tribesman, "and tell him that if he is not here within a minute and a half, I will open fire on him with my machine guns."

All this time the black tents were apparently void of life, and a fateful silence brooded everywhere as we waited expectant and watchful. I glanced at Leachman; he stood motionless, a tall, lean figure, his hands behind his back, grasping a short thick stick, and in his eye a look of stern defiance. His jaw was set tight, for I could see the taut muscles standing out.

He was no longer the man whom most men knew; he was seemingly another, a man of steel, unflinching, calm, and, for the first time, I fully realized the reason for his almost miraculous power over the wild men he controlled. Yet even then, I confess, I doubted whether Jiza'a would come out from the midst of his 500 armed followers, as directed, and inwardly I wondered what our fate might be. A few more breathless seconds, which anxiety stretched out to leaden minutes, and then suddenly I spied a shuffling, stumbling figure, dodging in and out of the tents, and hurrying nervously in our direction.

Having cleared the camp, he made straight for Leachman, and when a few feet distant, shrieked:

"*Dakhailak, dakhailak* (your protection, your protection)."

Leachman sprang forward like a wild cat and seized him by both wrists. He swung him backward and forward, rocking him on his heels. "*Men* (who is) Leachman, eh?" he bawled, and Jiza'a kept wailing, "*Dakhailak, dakhailak*."

"Get hold of him," said Leachman to me, "and into the car with him."

Bundling him in we raced back to the armoured cars.

Jiza'a was handcuffed and placed in the Ford van,

with two British soldiers for a guard and the driver told to go straight to Baghdad.

Not a shot was fired in his defence, yet the two armoured cars were useless. The Arabs had but to line the brow of the hill to be behind perfect cover. The cars could advance no nearer, and, at the distance at which they were, would have been of small use, either as protection or as a menace. In any case, it was not the cars, but Leachman who forced Jiza'a to surrender, and who made cowards of his following.

I thought our day's adventuring done, but it soon appeared to be otherwise. Leachman got into his car and turned towards the south, making, as I soon saw, for the main Anaiza encampment. Once more ill-fortune attended the armoured cars, and we reached the centre of the vast encampment with the original six reduced to one. It seemed ridiculous to halt there, as we eventually did, in the middle of that hive of Arab tents, which stretched away beyond our vision to the north and south.

Leachman seemed to know where Fahed Bey's deputy had his tent, and halted within a few yards of a tent slightly larger and less sombre than its fellows.

Once more he sent in his messenger and told the sheikh to attend him. Thirty seconds were sufficient to bring him out. Leachman, his arm outstretched, a long, bony finger pointing to the inhospitable waste to give his words more emphasis, ordered him sternly to command the whole tribe to retire at once into the desert. The sheikh sullenly refused.

"I will give you a quarter of an hour to say '*Rahla*'"—the word of command which sets a tribe upon the move—and Leachman told him what he had done to Jiza'a. He promised that if he did not obey, he would share Jiza'a's fate.

"*Allah karim* (God is merciful)," said Leachman sternly, "A quarter of an hour I give you to obey.

If in that time you say not '*Rahla*,' I will open fire upon your camp."

Conceive of one machine-gun, which could have been overwhelmed in a single rush, doing any serious harm to certainly ten, most probably fifteen, thousand men when they were spread out over seven or eight miles of country. I expected to see the sheikh laugh his derision, but he was far from laughing. His brows contracted in a deep scowl.

"By God, no," he said.

Leachman told me to seize him and make him sit upon the ground by his car. I took my seat beside him in the dust of the road, and there he sat as the minutes dragged by. He kept his head lowered on his breast, his fingers drumming upon his knees, and as I watched those restless fingers I wondered, in breathless suspense, whether this proud chieftain of ten thousand would, nay, could, obey so humiliating a command or whether he would bid defiance and call his men to attack.

So the minutes dragged by, and Leachman strolled unconcernedly up and down before the line, idly flicking at the grasses with his cane, unmindful of the baleful glances shot at him from innumerable pairs of fierce eyes.

Finally Leachman turned to me.

"How much of the time is gone?" he asked.

"Eleven minutes," I answered.

Once more Leachman's calmness left him. He stood over the sheikh.

"Four minutes yet remain, and if they pass without your obeying, I open fire." Then "*Qul rahla*, (say, depart)," he shouted at him.

For yet two minutes more the sheikh remained obdurate, and our fate hung by a hair, and I can still feel the tenseness of those moments in which I could sense the bitter struggle between pride and fear going

on in the sheikh's heart, and I can see those silent, sullen men of his standing motionless, awaiting their chief's decision.

Then, with but a few seconds remaining, he suddenly sprang to his feet, and in a voice hoarse and rattling, croaked his submission.

"*Rahla.*" The fateful word was uttered in agony, as if it had been torn from his breast, and yet once more he repeated in a lower voice "*Rahla.*" The word was taken up and passed along, and within twenty minutes the dust of incoming camels was everywhere visible, and the black tents were falling in rapid succession. When I passed that way at night the place was deserted and a peaceful silence rested over the whole land.

Mosul is 280 miles from Karbela. Jiza'a's defiant message had only reached Leachman the previous afternoon. By 5.0 a.m. he was in Karbela, and by 10.30 a.m. 15,000 armed men had been driven away against their will by his order.

I later sent him a photograph of himself, standing before the Anaiza tents with his arm outstretched towards the desert as he ordered them to depart. It was a dramatic picture.

"How awful," he wrote when he acknowledged it. "Why, I look just like a bishop addressing his flock!"

No clearer or impressive example could be given of Leachman's complete domination of this powerful Arab tribe. It can truthfully be stated that in the whole history of the Arab race such an incident is unprecedented. No use of force could have produced this bloodless retreat. During the Turkish régime a full division would have been necessary to have forced a similar result. Yet the Arabs knew full well that there were no British troops within eighty miles. No Arab leader foreign to the confederation would have presumed even to have attempted the task. That a

foreigner and non-Moslem should succeed in impelling obedience to his will appears almost miraculous. Yet Leachman not only upheld authority and administered punishment, and a severe one at that, for he banished the whole confederation, guilty and innocent alike, from their grazing grounds and sent them back to the sparse pastures of the desert proper ; but with the doubtful aid of a single machine-gun he did it without a shot being fired. To administer a stern justice yet maintain the peace was Leachman's task throughout the western desert. How was he able to succeed in so difficult an undertaking ? Cowardice certainly cannot be imputed to the "Amarat," they were a nation of proved warriors. The inflexibility of his will was the chief reason. They knew by experience that they could not bend it. His courage was another. They knew they could not shake it. Finally and not least there was Justice. They knew they had done wrong. They knew he was right and they had learnt to trust and to love him. It was this knowledge of justice which finally triumphed over all other emotions—feelings of pride and of race and of a defiance bred of centuries of lawlessness.

And what of Leachman himself ? I can state positively that he feared the outcome, yet never by the slightest sign or tremor or even inflection in his voice did he betray his doubt. His sense of duty prevailed over every other consideration. If he had failed it would have been because they had killed him. I have been privileged to witness many stirring deeds ; but never before or since have I witnessed so complete a triumph of duty in the face of hopeless odds. Nor, when the strain was over and the victory won, have I witnessed such chivalrous kindness and sweetness—I can use no other adjective—than Leachman displayed to the sheikh to mitigate his punishment and to re-establish his pride.

CHAPTER XXII

O.C. DESERT—*continued*

THE TAKING OF SHITHATHA AND THE DELIVERANCE OF KARBELA

STILL more remarkable than the incident just recorded were the taking of Shithatha and the deliverance of Karbela.

Forty miles to the west of Karbela, over a rolling plain, there is situated an oasis consisting of three hundred thousand palm trees, for their number has been counted for taxation purposes.

In the midst of this oasis are scattered a number of Arab mud huts, and at the southern extremity the little town of Shithatha. It is built round an underground river which has forced up the ground like a miniature crater, over which it falls in a foaming cascade, whose strength never varies, and forming a swiftly-moving stream which winds amongst the palms and lucerne, then disappearing into the desert as suddenly as it broke forth.

Cooled and refreshed by this stream, Shithatha lies on the caravan route between Damascus and Karbela, and in times of peace the caravans rest here at night, both on their outward and inward journeys, so that the centre of the township is provided with a fairly large square, where camels may be unloaded, fed and rested ; whilst round the square are lodging houses to provide shelter and food for the more wealthy of the merchants and travellers.

The square is approached on the east by a narrow street, about a quarter of a mile in length and ten feet in breadth, hemmed in by mud-built, flat-roofed houses.

Army headquarters received information that Shithatha was being used by the Turks as a depot from which to supply arms to those tribesmen who were hostile to the British, and as a centre from which their spies could be sent out. It was governed by a pro-Turk party, which, being utterly opposed to the British, made these activities secure. In this manner Shithatha was made a stronghold for the Turkish cause, and one which they hoped lay well outside the power of British interference.

The place was, in fact, difficult of access for the British. Situated on the Turkish right flank, it lay far beyond the field of British operations, and to have sent a small expedition there would have been a hazardous undertaking.

It was a thorn in our side and British headquarters were in a dilemma as to how to deal with the situation. In their difficulty they sent for Leachman, and asked his advice. Leachman agreed that to send an expedition, even if the men, arms, cars, and guns could be spared, would present a multitude of difficulties, and some other course must be adopted. He said that he would see what could be done and would report later.

Leaving Army Headquarters he travelled straight to Karbela and there picked up his faithful servant, Hassan, and together these two intrepid companions set out alone by car across the desert.

On approaching Shithatha, they were received by a straggling fire directed upon them from the rooftops, for their approach had been observed some distance away.

Leachman, therefore, left the car and, ordering

Hassan to remain in it, he approached the town alone and on foot.

They shot at him wildly, making poor aim, yet near enough to halt most men ; but Leachman did not hurry beyond the usual pace which his spindly legs adopted. The shots of his nervous opponents went astray, and he reached the entrance to the town miraculously unscathed.

Here an Arab youth leaning over the roof took a hurried shot at him. Leachman put his hand into his pocket, drew out a Mills bomb, and extracting the pin, tossed it on to the roof. When four seconds had elapsed, its violent explosion not only blew the sniper to bits but ended all resistance, for no one knew how many more bombs he might possess, and they were totally unused to this form of missile, whose roar promised unimaginable destruction.

Leachman then proceeded to the central square of the town, and loudly shouted for the town council immediately to attend. When they arrived, with furtive air and surly looks, he ordered them to sit down upon the ground, to which most of them were unaccustomed, being men of position and used to a more comfortable method of repose. The whole populace assembled and viewed with astonishment the debasement of their rulers.

Leachman then called out the names of two of his friends, whom he had met in previous years, and they replied at his elbow, having hurried up as soon as they recognized his lanky form.

Turning to the councillors seated on the ground, he informed them that they were dismissed from office, and, turning to his two friends, appointed one *rais al baladiyah* (mayor) and the other his assistant, and told them at once to form a new town council from among their own followers. In twenty minutes the new council was appointed, and Leachman

then instructed them as their first duty to collect all weapons of offence and have them brought to the square. On this being done, he redistributed them amongst those of whose friendship he was assured. Next he rounded up all those known to be pro-Turkish, and ordered them to leave the place immediately.

Leachman remained in Shithatha until the town was secure for British interests, and then quietly left, merely reporting to headquarters that Shithatha was no longer pro-Turk.

Later, during one of his visits to Karbela, he decided to proceed to Shithatha, which his many duties had prevented him from visiting for some time and about whose situation he was anxious, as he had heard that Turkish intrigue was again beginning to be prevalent there. He asked me to accompany him while he more firmly established our friends, and in order to enable me to become better acquainted with a town of some importance to my own charge.

On reaching Shithatha, as we were walking towards the square, an old hag suddenly appeared from a side street. On seeing Leachman she followed us, raising skinny arms to heaven and all the while emitting shrill cries. "What is the matter with the old dame?" I asked Leachman. "Oh! She is mad and is cursing me," he replied. But he forgot I knew Arabic. She was not cursing him but blessing him. When Leachman went about his duties I made my own inquiries regarding the old lady.

I found that she was the mother of the young man who had shot at Leachman at the taking of the town, and whom he had blown to pieces with his Mills bomb, in order to save his own life and capture Shithatha. Later the old lady had told Leachman of her loss, a loss more desperate for her than for

others since she was a widow and the boy her only support. So Leachman promptly pensioned her off out of his own salary, nor did he ever visit Shithatha without bringing her some little gift. Indeed, on this occasion I discovered a bundle in the Ford van, which proved to be provisions and two warm blankets he had brought her.

Almost immediately after the single-handed capture of Shithatha, Leachman saved the city of Karbela in an even more audacious manner. In fact, his action on this second occasion showed a foolhardy contempt for his personal safety, and a confidence in the result which no one but himself could have shared. It is true that the situation demanded instant action, but the risks he took were indeed great, for had he failed to achieve his purpose, not only would he have lost his own prestige over the Arabs, and probably his life, but he would have created the most serious difficulties for the civil and military authorities, who would have had to send a punitive force to restore order. But his self-confidence was justified and his courage triumphed against impossible odds. He saved Karbela and, although afterwards he did not give the matter an instant's thought, it added further lustre to a name already renowned.

This is what happened :

Between the settled Arabs and the townsmen there existed an implacable hatred. The former regarded the town-dweller as one worth small consideration, whose manly qualities had been sapped by easy living and licentious ways, and longed to lay hands on the wealth which these "degenerates" had amassed. On the other hand the townsman regarded the settled Arab as he did the Bedouin, as a man of little education and less manners, and as one nearly akin to the beasts of the field.

Karbela, being one of the holy cities, has many treasures in its mosques, well-stocked market places, and many wealthy citizens. It lies isolated from other towns, surrounded by a sea of tribesmen, who ever dream of the plunder of those riches they see displayed before their hungry eyes when they visit the town to make their meagre purchases.

In Turkish times the Ottoman Government kept a brigade of cavalry and a battery of artillery in the town, to keep such desires in check. When the ebb of the Turkish army flowed slowly north and north-west, Karbela was left alone for reasons of policy. There being no sign of any British forces coming to take over the control lately exercised by the Turkish brigade, the settled Arabs conceived it to be a grand opportunity for looting the town. They massed among its palm-groves and encircled the town with intent to capture it.

Leachman was in the neighbourhood of Musaiyib when he received the news. The situation was critical in the extreme ; time was short ; no troops could possibly have been brought up in time to save the town ; so he decided to deliver it single-handed.

Armed with a decapitated polo-stick, and accompanied by his faithful servant Hassan, he hastened to the scene of action. When he neared the town he could hear the desultory fire of the Arab tribesmen who had just commenced their assault. It was ill-defended and likely to fall an easy prey to this attack.

Leachman marched boldly into the palm groves which concealed the attacking force. On reaching their straggling firing line he demanded of the nearest marksman who and where was the sheikh in command. The man turned an excited and blood-shot eye on him, grunted out some term of abuse, and then continued his shooting.

Leachman smote his recumbent form a resounding blow which had instant effect. Sullenly the man led him to an individual who was as heartily engaged in firing as his henchman had been. Poking him with his stick, Leachman ordered him to stop at once and order his men to follow suit, and withdraw from the gardens and go back to their villages. The man refused. Thereupon Leachman gave a sign to Hassan, who suddenly leapt upon the sheikh, bore him to the ground, and seated himself upon his shoulders. Leachman then began to belabour the sheikh's bare legs, shouting at him the while to give the command to cease fighting and retire.

For some time the sheikh remained obdurate but, eventually, his calves being less inured to pain than his will to obstinacy, he shouted out the necessary order, and Leachman stopped the thrashing and told him to clear out with his men.

Having gone some distance, however, the sheikh, chagrined at being dragged away from so near a prospect of plunder, repented of his instructions and shouted to his followers, who had regretfully abandoned the conflict, to return and continue it ; whereupon Hassan made a rush at him and once more threw him to the ground. Once more Leachman began to belabour him. On this occasion the sheikh's fortitude was amazing, or his calves benumbed, for the beating lasted so long that Leachman's arm was rapidly tiring, and he told me that if the sheikh had managed to hold out for a minute longer he would have been forced to desist. Luckily for him, and for the citizens of the town, the sheikh reached the end of his resistance first, and once more shouted out the order to retire. This time he did not retract it, and his men followed him out of the palm groves into the open plain.

Khidr Ibn Abbas, who has already been mentioned,

says that the aggressor tribes were Beni Hassan, Grait, Al Mas'ud, Al Yissin, Sadat al Avd and Al Da'um. He states that Leachman was armed, but I had it from Leachman himself that he was unarmed when the news reached him and had no means of procuring a weapon, "besides," he said, "a weapon would have been useless."

One cannot but marvel at the indomitable courage displayed by Leachman on this occasion. When the Arab is heated with the lust of battle he is, at best, a dangerous element; he is oblivious to risk and regardless of danger to himself or others. When, in addition, there is the prospect of loot he becomes like one possessed. The cool daring of Leachman then is the more remarkable, for not only did he expose himself to the rage of men intoxicated with battle, but increased the peril for himself by thrashing their leader.

* * *

Such are a few eye-witnesses' accounts of the methods Leachman employed in carrying out his duties as Political Officer Desert.

From Leachman himself there are seven letters covering the period July, 1917-July, 1918. These are given in full for they afford an interesting comparison between the actual happenings and his own description of his work.

"Karbela. 3.7.17. I have been having a bad attack of Baghdad. Not having been there for five weeks, the powers that be thought they would like to see me. I went in, worked hard and managed to escape sooner than usual. Having got out eight miles they thought they had something more to say to me and recalled me. So I toiled in again only to find that they had forgotten what they wanted to say to me.

I bore all this with my usual equanimity. All the people who sit in offices and drink iced drinks were rejoicing over the honours list. Everyone seems to have got something and if it isn't the D.S.O. it is the order of the White something-or-other of Serbia.

"Baghdad. 22.7.17. I have just come in from the desert, and am still simmering from the effects of living in a sort of furnace for the last ten days. By bad luck this time has been remarkable for one of the hottest spells that has been experienced in this country for some years. The heat fairly soaked into one, and even the camels would not eat, but would only lie down and try and get out of the appalling gale which blew day and night. Apart from this I had an extremely interesting time, as I was the first of the conquering race to go into the towns of that part. The people were extraordinarily friendly, as they had suffered badly at the hands of the Turks. I shall be away again in a day or two. I am getting rather tired of the Political Department. It is not at all like old times when one could do exactly as one liked and never refer to anyone. Now we have a lot of specimens of young Oxford, who never get out of an office chair, and bother unfortunate people like myself who lead a strenuous life, but, thank goodness, neither have the time, nor the inclination to do much office work. Very little would send me back to the office now, and I should be much happier.

"Karbela. 6.1.18. I have just come back from a several days' journey, most of it in the rain. Sounds quite funny, doesn't it, but though it was extremely unpleasant, it made me rejoice, as it will give grass to my Bedouin who

are now my chief subjects and of whom I am extremely fond. I am summoning up courage to go into Baghdad, but I am not fond of the place, or rather of the people in it. I feel, however, that it is my duty to go in sometimes, or I get into too great a state of jungliness. I still have hair to get cut, which operation can only be done there.

"Karbela. 23.1.18. I have not much to relate. I went on a prolonged visit to Baghdad for four days, the longest I have ever been there. . . . I saw many old friends and we dined late and long. Radwell came and stayed with me, and then came back to Karbela with me, but his visit was cut short by his being recalled, and my having to go off after some ruffians. Radwell was very amusing. I never saw anyone so lethargic; I think he looked at me as if I was mad, and could not understand the frantic state of bustle one has to be in to keep things on the move. It freezes like anything at night now and I have had several very chilly lie-outs in the desert. With all its beastliness, I think I prefer the hot weather, except that one is fitter in the cold. I feel about sixteen and I am sure my hair is growing again.

"My only trouble at the present time is that my boy, whom I have had for a very long time, has disappeared. I am afraid he discovered a charmer in Baghdad, and, being of an impressionable nature, could not tear himself away. He will return in time, but I do not know if I shall keep him, as when they get these fits on them Arabs are a nuisance, and are really not responsible for their actions. It is a pity, as he is a good boy.

"Karbela. 16.2.18. I have not had a

chance of writing lately as I have been out in the wilds. The weather is getting more suitable for lying about without blankets, but there is room for improvement still, and after the rain, of which we have had a great deal this year, it is very chilly. I have been down into the parts of Mesopotamia where the old canals were, and where it used to be wonderfully fertile. We have been digging out the canals, and the whole country is under cultivation with a large population. Eight years ago I came, on a camel, up through the same country and there was not a blade of grass to be seen and not a soul living there. In fact, there was no water to drink. The Turk certainly was a rotter in this country. I have had another visit to Baghdad. I received a hoarse order to go in and when I got there after a journey of 75 miles, they said they were sorry but did not want me. As I am no lover of Baghdad I was somewhat annoyed. Wilson (Sir Arnold Wilson) is in great form and very hard worked. He is a truly wonderful person and, withal, very nice. In spite of his hard work, he is most thoughtful for the unfortunates like myself, who lead a sort of jackal existence.

"Karbela. 4.7.18. We have had somewhat stirring times lately, and I have been rushing about the country in a wild way. It has been raining violently, so a car has been of no use. I generally think that riding is much better for me than a car, and one can keep in touch with people better than rushing about in a car. It wastes time though, and I am at present suffering from that 'painful but almost universal complaint' for the first time in my life, which does not add to the joys of a life in the saddle,

. . . Another of my sufferings is my inability to sleep. I don't think I ever am really asleep, and long before dawn, I am wide awake. I think it must be from being perpetually on the move at earliest dawn, as I have been for the last three years. I shall be the bane of the housemaid if I ever come home. We await the news from home with great anxiety but thank the gods it seems to be going well.

"Karbela. 3.II.I8. I have just come back from a most heart-rending trip. It seems to me they ask me to do harder and more impossible things every day. I never succeed in anything now and the worst of it is I start out with the knowledge that I cannot succeed. I am what is politely called 'fed up.' They have just sent me a magnificent car. I think my ponies must be glad to see it. Poor beasts, they have had a jolly hard time of it. . . . We have just had a successful show at Ramadi in which I had a slight share from rather a distance. I was rather like the stage butler who walks on and announces someone's name and my share in the show was about as important. I had an amusing letter from the old mess sergeant. He says 'you will be sorry to hear that the new officers do not keep up the old customs. I wish you were back, sir, and so does the Regiment.'"

Leachman refers in this last letter to General Sir Harry Brooking's successful operations on the Euphrates. The result of the repulse of the Turks was to bring the whole of the Dulaim division, with its powerful tribes, under British control. Leachman was sent to gain contact with the principal sheikhs and inaugurate the civil administration. This he successfully accomplished and was for a

time in charge of the division. He refers here, too, to the abortive attempt to capture Ajaimi Al Sa'dun, already mentioned. No one could have done more than he did, but his remarks regarding his failure to accomplish what he had set out to do, afford another instance how keenly he felt the non-success of any mission with which he had been entrusted. Under these circumstances he always bitterly reproached himself. He was so severe on himself that he invariably placed all the blame upon his own shoulders. He refused to admit, what was indeed the case, that circumstances over which he had no control had baulked him.

Leachman gives us in these letters, covering the period in which he was O.C. Desert, practically no actual details of the work he carried out. All that is to be learnt from them is that he continued to suffer the greatest hardships. "The heat fairly soaked into me"—"I have just come back from a several days' journey mostly in the rain"—"It freezes like anything at nights now and I have had several very chilly lie-outs in the desert"—"I have not had a chance of writing lately as I have been out in the wilds. The weather is getting more suitable for lying about without blankets but there is room for improvement still"—"Another of my sufferings is inability to sleep. I don't think I am ever really asleep and long before dawn I am wide awake. I think it must be from being perpetually on the move at earliest dawn, as I have been for the last three years." Such are a few examples of the vicissitudes he endured during the course of a year from his resuming his desert duties.

In the whole series of letters there is not a single complaint regarding the hardships he endured practically every day. He merely reports them philosophically as incidents in his life. On the other hand

he rages against his treatment by the Baghdad officials. Yet it will be noted that, except for minor ailments, he throve on this mode of existence. His constitution was astonishing, and, when that showed signs of giving way, he carried on through sheer will-power.

His house in Karbela was remarkably comfortable. Every door and window was provided with fly-proof netting. It was spotlessly clean. His bedroom and bed linen could not have been improved upon. His table and cutlery were above reproach, and his food beautifully cooked. His office was extremely neat, every paper in its place, its table unencumbered. He had few opportunities for enjoying the luxury of his well-ordered establishment. I was six months in Karbela. During that period Leachman passed six nights in his house. He spent a few days in Baghdad. Every other night was spent in the desert. But the care he expended on his "home from home" shows how greatly he appreciated good living and comfort. It could have been no easy matter for a man, endowed by nature with a love of ordered ease, to go out into the waste places and live the life of a vagrant. There was no one to order his goings and comings. He was to all intents and purposes his own master. If he had remained in Karbela for a month at a time no one would have been any the wiser, yet such was his high sense of duty that he imposed harsher treatment upon himself than would have been demanded of him by the most exacting of chiefs. Moreover, he was a man who seldom considered that he had properly carried out the task which had been entrusted to him. His own standards were so high that he frequently grieved that he had failed (as he thought) in its full performance.

Whether he would have been content to sit for

long at an office desk is doubtful. His nature was too volcanic and his physical energy too mercurial. It is true that as acting adjutant to his regiment, as station staff officer and as brigade-major, he had earned for himself the high opinion of his superiors, but these appointments had been held in India under totally different conditions, and even then he had taken every opportunity for escaping into the greater freedom of the open spaces. For three years now he had lived continuously in the open. The major portion of each day and night had been spent in physical exertion, and he had been the sole judge of the methods which could best be employed to deal with each situation as it arose.

His chief had later on occasion to complain that Leachman kept him insufficiently informed as to what was taking place, but in the first place he had practically no opportunities for drafting reports. No sooner was one mission accomplished than he was off on another, always under conditions where writing was an impossibility. The proof of this statement is afforded by his correspondence to his mother. In the South African war, during a period of thirty months, sixty-five of his letters are available. In India, he never failed to write every fortnight. During the first year he was in Mesopotamia, thirty letters reached his home. Now during the course of a full year seven letters are all that can be traced.

Mention has already been made of the vast extent of country he traversed, during a short period, when he was first appointed to desert work. Before the war a single such journey would have been considered an exploration in itself, yet under war conditions it passed without comment. When we come to know what his duties as Desert Political Officer were, we are left in no doubt that his work could not

be judged by any known standard. These duties are given by the Air Staff Intelligence Headquarters at Baghdad as follows :

“ The objects of his being stationed with Fahed Bey were to deny passage of the desert as far as possible to enemy bands or agents. To keep constant watch on the western flank (of the army), the desert tribes and the holy cities (where Turkish propaganda was always endeavouring to get a hold) and to enforce the blockade on the outward routes to prevent supplies of food and other trade articles of military value passing to the Turks.”

The extent of country covered by these instructions was 150,000 square miles. It is doubtful whether the authorities realized the magnitude of the task or what it would entail on the individual selected to carry it out. Viewed in the light of later events it would seem to have been far beyond the capabilities of a single individual. The distances it was important, nay, essential to cover would of themselves have seemed beyond the power of one man to traverse, but when in addition the numerous affrays, raids and minor punitive expeditions are taken into account and the intensive efforts the Turks and Germans were making to nullify his efforts, it would seem incredible that a solitary individual could achieve even a small proportion of what was necessary to make the control of the western desert effective. Yet Leachman performed this miracle of endeavour. Moreover, it should especially be noted that he had to guard the western flank of the army. In Palestine General Allenby's flank was supported by Feisal's Arabs, led by Lawrence and a number of capable British and Arab officers and amply supplied with arms, ammunition and money. Leachman

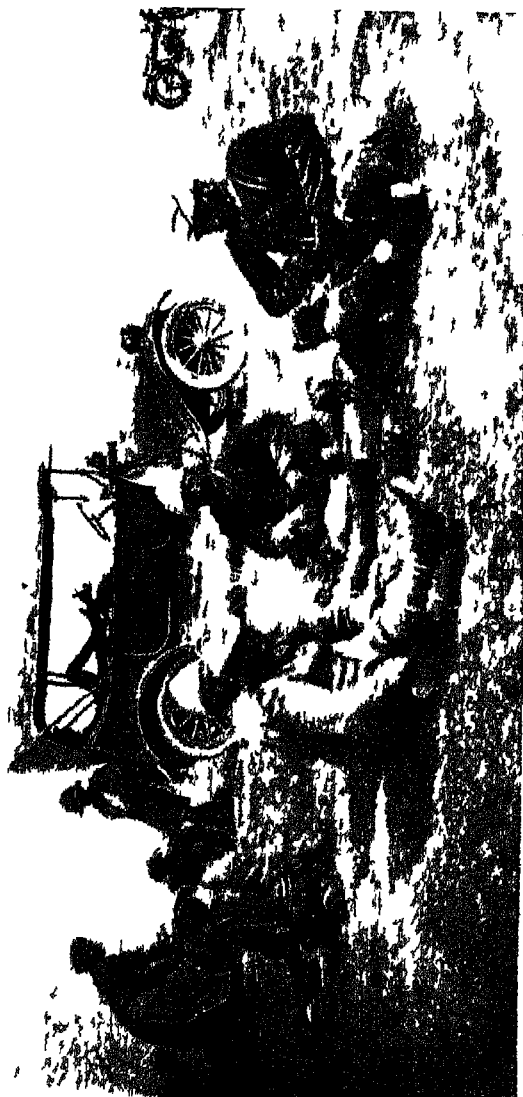
was single-handed and his responsible task was not only to guard the western flank, but, in sharp contrast to the Palestine front, to keep the desert at peace.

In relating his first exploration, the reader will remember that reference was made to the Austrian Alois Musil and to the fact that he, with other German and Austrian agents, had for years been preparing the ground for controlling the desert in war time. Against a solid array of well-equipped enemy agents, supplied with almost inexhaustible funds, and despite the influence the near presence of the Turkish armies was bound to have on wavering spirits, Leachman, single-handed, prevailed. Apart from the actual fact that he gained undisputed control of the whole western desert, the final proof of his success is afforded by the most distinguished and capable of the German agents himself.

On March 25, 1918, the Turks were utterly defeated by General Brooking in the neighbourhood of Khan Baghdadi. The armoured cars under Captain D. Tod pursued the Turks to a point seventy-three miles beyond Ana and captured several Germans, including the redoubtable Herr Preusser, head of the German Mission on the Euphrates, who carried with him important documents and a carefully-kept diary. These were taken possession of by the British. In the diary was this entry—"Not all the blandishments of the Turks, nor all the gold they have distributed, nor any German effort can undermine the influence among the tribes of *one* man, Leachman." When Preusser was later confronted with Leachman he sprang to his feet and saluted; he asked that he might shake him by the hand, saying that although circumstances made them enemies he had long desired to meet one for whom he had so great an admiration.

To all intents and purposes it was Leachman and not Fahed Bey who ruled the Anaiza. It was a remarkable sight to see him either in the desert camp or in his home at Karbela dealing with tribal affairs. Fahed Bey has said that the tribesmen regarded him as one of their sheikhs. This was quickly apparent from the attitude they adopted when he came among them. They flocked round him like a lot of schoolchildren round a favourite teacher. His patience and his humour were most noticeable, yet if any, even in ignorance, failed in what Leachman regarded as proper respect, in a flash his eye would glint and he would hurl his stick straight at the offender's head. The others would grin broadly and the offender would later approach respectfully and would invariably receive kindness and help from Leachman. Never before or since has any European had such influence with a desert tribe or gained such profound respect and love from men notoriously undemonstrative.

In the middle of October, 1918, it had been decided to take the offensive against the Turks and capture Mosul. Leachman was ordered to proceed as Political Officer to the troops. Once more we shall see how his peace-time work was to prove of benefit to his country. He already knew the town and, as will be recalled, had ridden along the very road the troops were now about to advance by. He was in every way qualified for the important work with which he would now be entrusted.



LEACHMAN READING A MAGAZINE IN HIS FAMOUS 'DODGE'
DURING A PAUSE IN THE BATTLE IN WHICH THE TURKISH OFFICERS
SITTING IN THE FOREGROUND WERE CAPTURED BY HIM

CHAPTER XXIII

GOVERNOR OF MOSUL OCTOBER 1918—JANUARY 1920

ON October 2, 1918, General Marshall, G.O.C. in Mesopotamia, who had returned from leave in England, was informed by the War Office that the defection of Bulgaria and our successes in Palestine and Syria made a request by the Turks for an armistice not unlikely.

In view of this possibility the authorities in Mesopotamia, both military and civil, determined to make a great effort to occupy as much of the northern section of the country as possible. The vilayet of Mosul and the occupation of the town of Mosul itself was to be the objective.

By October 22 all preparations for an advance were complete. Barring the road to Mosul were two Turkish forces. The first was on the Lesser Zab, and strongly entrenched on both sides of the Tigris in the neighbourhood of Ain Dibil, consisted of about 5,500 rifles and forty-two field guns. The second was in and around Altun Kupri, fifty-four miles in the left rear of the Turkish main position, and Kirkuk at a similar distance due east, both places being astride the road to Mosul via Arbil.

The British force, under command of General Cobbe, consisted of the 18th Division under Major-General Fanshawe, and the 17th Division under Major-General Leslie, operating respectively on the left and right bank of the Tigris; two cavalry

brigades, the 7th and 11th, under General Cassels, were on the left bank, while the Light Armoured Motor Brigade, to which Leachman was attached, was entrusted with a special mission on the right bank.

This mission was one which gave Leachman the very keenest pleasure, and it suited his temperament admirably ; for while acting under the instructions of the G.O.C., and in close collaboration with the troops, they were to have an independent task. This was to circle the right flank of the Turkish position well to the rear, and, in conjunction with the cavalry, place themselves astride the line of the Turkish retreat and pin them to their positions until the less mobile forces could surround and capture them.

Leachman, instead of being on a lone task, would now share the difficulties and dangers of the venture with men having dash and energy of an exceptional kind. Men who were inured to acting independently in perilous situations, who had already proved their capabilities some months earlier on a similar mission on the Euphrates, when the whole Turkish force was captured. The L.A.M.B.'s, as they were designated in brief, contained a picked body of men. Nor were they all British. They had men like Kermit Roosevelt, who was with them till he was recalled to command a battery of his own countrymen in France, but not before he had done magnificent work in Mesopotamia, for which he received both the D.S.O. and M.C., and who, as one of his N.C.O.'s wrote, " God knows earned all that and more," and who, to make himself more proficient, learnt Arabic and spoke it tolerably well. Jack Summers, that stout-hearted, splendid American who was awarded the D.C.M., was another. He always drove " The Skipper, a swell guy and a grand soldier " ; he is

now ranching in New Mexico. Then there was that fine little Swiss, Milson, who could only talk broken English but could get his motor-cycle, Kermit Roosevelt tells us, where no one else could, and than whom "no one was more cool or collected under fire." These are just a few of those who, together with their British comrades, formed a brotherhood of brave men, and the task set them was one fully in keeping with their reputations and capabilities.

Leachman, to his great satisfaction, joined this select band, for, as he said, it was "the one job of all others I would have chosen."

On October 23 the British offensive was launched. On the 25th the L.A.M.B.'s were already astride the Turkish line of retreat just north of Sharqa which they had found occupied by 1,000 men with guns. Their instructions were to delay the Turks at all cost. They could not hope to hold up the Turkish army if it retreated, but the cavalry was round the Turkish flanks, and every hour the Turkish retreat could be delayed would prove of inestimable value, so they clung on with astonishing tenacity and maintained their position against repeated attacks. By the evening of the 27th the net had almost closed round the Turks. General Cassels, with part of the 11th Cavalry Brigade, after having crossed the Tigris with considerable difficulty, had taken up a strong position at Huwaish. Even so, the cavalry and armoured cars were insufficient to withstand a general assault. Had the Turks retreated during the night it is doubtful if this small force could have held them. But not fully realizing their danger, they failed to do so. Early the next morning General Cassels's position was still rather precarious, but he felt confident that he could now hold the enemy till the attack of the 17th Division developed. That night the 7th Cavalry Brigade, after a magnificent

maich of forty-five miles, crossed the river at night and joined General Cassels. His line was now some four miles long, extending from the Tigris into very broken ground on his right flank which was covered by the L.A.M.B.'s. From noon till dusk he was continuously attacked by parties of Turkish infantry, supported by guns, who were trying to break through.

Through the magnificent fighting of his troops, General Cassels maintained his position with the result that the British main attack was able to develop, and at daybreak on October 30 the whole Turkish force surrendered. The Turks between October 18 and 30 lost 11,000 prisoners and fifty-one guns, and the cost of victory was 1,800 British casualties. The cavalry and the L.A.M.B.'s advanced on October 31 to Qaiyara, forty miles from Mosul.

Everyone with the armoured cars, Leachman included, was so occupied with fighting either minor or major actions during the whole of this period that no one had leisure for making written notes. The tale of their many stirring adventures is therefore lost to us, but as an example of the audacity of the L.A.M.B.'s, one incident may be recorded.

When operating alone well in the rear of the Turks, in the initial stages of the operations, Leachman and Corporal Summers at dawn came upon a Turkish aerodrome and what happened shall be told in the words of Corporal Summers himself :

" I do not believe," he writes, " that this (the photograph shown facing) could be duplicated on this or any other front. We drove into the Turkish aerodrome at sun-up, fired about ten rounds at a bunch of mechanics, hoisted the tail of the machine on to our armoured car, spun round and took it back to camp with us."



ONE OF THE MOST AUDACIOUS DEEDS IN THE WAR -
THE CAPTURE BY LEACHMAN AND JACK SUMMERS OF A
TURKISH AEROPLANE FROM ITS AERODROME BEHIND
THE TURKISH LINES



A 'CLOSE-UP' OF THE 'PLANE ITSELF

As a result of his conduct with the armoured cars, Leachman won the decoration he had been longing to get for seventeen years—the D.S.O. He had been denied it on the score of his youth in the South African campaign. He had earned it since, a score of times. He coveted it above any other decoration, and now at last it had actually been awarded to him “for carrying out a daring reconnaissance in face of the enemy.” I have never had so much pleasure as I had in writing to congratulate him upon it. Six months previously, sitting with him late at night in his house in Karbela, he told me that he thought he was losing his nerve. “I can’t be as strenuous with them (the Arabs) as I need to be and if I cannot impress them enough they will get me; but I would like to get the D.S.O. before they do it,” he said. Even then Leachman felt convinced that sooner or later he would lose his life by assassination. He knew that his sole protection lay in his audacity.

Writing to tell his people of its bestowal, he used these prophetic words :

“Ever since South Africa days I have hoped to to earn the distinction. Now I can die happy.”

On the morning of November 2 Leachman left in his famous Dodge for Mosul, with a letter from General Cassels to Ali Ihsan Pasha, requesting him to withdraw his troops at least five miles clear of Mosul, leaving only sufficient guards to prevent disorder till they could be relieved. Leachman impressed his views very strongly upon the Turkish G.O.C., but had to report at noon that Ali Ihsan Pasha would not leave Mosul, but had consented to evacuate the hills south of and commanding Mosul, which, he stated, General Cassels might occupy if he so wished. Leachman returned to Mosul the following morning and brought back Ali Ihsan Pasha for

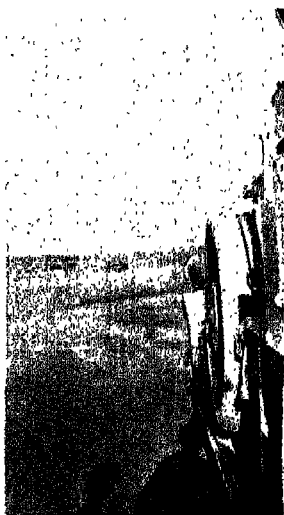
a personal interview with General Cassels. After a few more days of negotiation the town was surrendered to the British on November 7.

Leachman was appointed immediately military governor of Mosul and political officer in charge of the vilayet. He lost no time in taking over from the *qadi*. "Never perhaps in his life was fiery energy and irresistible driving power used to better advantage," says his chief, Sir Arnold Wilson. "Twenty-four hours after Ali Ihsan Pasha had signed the conditions set forth, Turkish flags were still flying over every public building, Turkish officers were still busy selling military stores, and Turkish officials, great and small, were secreting or burning Turkish civil records, whilst Turkish police officials were reported to be raising a corps of irregulars to resist the extension of our influence in the vilayet. Leachman wasted no time in issuing proclamations, having given orders to all and sundry that anyone found abroad after dark would be shot on sight. He made, with the assistance of officers lent him by General Cassels, a series of raids on the houses of Turkish officials, as well as on their offices, impounding the records and taking into custody those he suspected of theft and other malpractices. A few inhabitants found in the act of pillaging were shot; some leading local notables were appointed to official positions with good salaries, and told to provide local police until permanent arrangements could be made. The outcome was satisfactory to all concerned."

Once more Leachman's peace-time work proved of inestimable value. He knew those who could be trusted to collaborate loyally with him. His judgment was never at fault. The confidence he inspired withstood the strain of the most critical times. He laid the foundations of the prosperity which the city enjoys to-day.



**TURKISH ENVOYS BROUGHT IN BY LEACHMAN
TO DISCUSS TERMS OF THE ARMISTICE**



**ALI IHSAN PASHA
SIGNING THE ARMISTICE
(GROUP IN FAR DISTANCE)**

*Leachman's driver who took the photograph
was not allowed to approach nearer*



**TURKISH ENVOYS
LEAVING WITH LEACHMAN
AFTER SIGNING THE ARMISTICE**

His appointment as governor of the town and province of Mosul gave Leachman an opportunity for displaying his qualities as an administrator. He had under him a fine body of political officers. Wilson had been at pains to provide him with the best obtainable and, with such men as Major R. W. Bullard, Lieut.-Colonel L. F. Nalder and Captain J. R. L. Bradshawe, he captained a strong team of active and capable men. The Turks had found it a difficult task to administer the province. On the north and north-east lay the mountainous country of the Kurds, a race notorious for its turbulence; on the south and west roamed the Shammar, a powerful Bedouin tribe which had already given no little trouble and which regarded looting as legitimate. On the north and north-west the remnants of the Turkish army were concentrated ready, in spite of the armistice and in spite of the collapse of the Central Powers, to create trouble and to reoccupy territory from which they had been so recently evicted.

The Turks spared no effort to keep the population, both Arab and Kurd, in a state of unrest. Their agents, sent by Haidar Bey, operating very skilfully from Van, swarmed over the province, threatening dire punishment to those who collaborated with the British and promising the most lavish recompense to those who rebelled. They were assisted in their subversive propaganda by the fact that the boundary of the province had not been clearly defined and that the fate of large numbers of the inhabitants could not in consequence be settled till peace was signed. The disastrous results which ensued will be described in a later chapter, but enough has been said to show that the task Leachman had now to perform was no easy one.

He set about it in his usual indefatigable manner.

His reorganization of the town itself was carried out in an incredibly short time. The manner in which he regulated the affairs of so important a city proves him to have had administrative ability of a high order. Having shown by his initial severity that he meant to govern, he won the ready co-operation of all classes by his sound common sense and justice and by the unselfish manner in which he promoted their welfare, sparing himself neither night nor day in working ceaselessly to promote their interests. Having settled matters in the city he left its administration in detail in the hands of his capable subordinates and turned his attention to the district. Communications were bad, the distances between the various Kurdish towns were long and the roads wound among a maze of mountain ranges. He therefore used the air to visit the chieftains, both Kurds and Arabs, and if there was trouble in any quarter he was, as usual, on the spot long before those causing it were expecting him.

At the end of December Leachman had obtained a grip on the province and had sent for all his possessions from India, anticipating a residence of some long duration in Mosul.

“ I have been doing a lot of flying lately,” he writes, “ not that I like it, but from necessity. I suppose I have flown a couple of thousand miles lately. I find it an excellent way of keeping my gentle parishioners in order. Wilson (Sir Arnold) has gone to Paris and I dare say you will see him in England. I am wondering when they will make him a K. ; he is the most amazing man. . . . I have just got out the whole of my possessions from India ; about half are ruined by moth. I caused some joy in our mess by trying on my Sandhurst red tunic. I am

pretty thin now, but I suppose I must have been a good deal less before the war. The weather is wonderful and Mosul looks very beautiful; it lies on the banks of the Tigris opposite Nineveh, and is in a cultural plain surrounded by a belt of hills forty miles away, and behind them a complete range of snowy mountains. I flew up to the snows a short while ago to correct a contrary Kurdish tribe; it was very wonderful but very unpleasant, as, if one's engine had cut out one had not a chance of a landing. One half of my country does not speak Arabic but Kurdish; it is an outlandish language and difficult to learn."

It was a totally new experience for Leachman to handle the Kurds, whose characteristics were so different from the Arabs; nevertheless, in the beginning, he made a brilliant success of it. Chiefly owing to the causes mentioned above, the position later deteriorated and some of the Kurdish chiefs rebelled and killed some of their political officers. Whether anything Leachman could have done would have prevented these unfortunate happenings could not have been decided without a very careful inquiry on the spot. One thing is certain, that Leachman quickly gained the respect and affection of these fierce hillsmen, as the following letter written by Hamo Sharro, chief of the Jabal Sinjar Yezidis, clearly shows :

"I have the honour to express my joy at the idea of a biography of the late Colonel Leachman being compiled. I am giving below a brief account of what I have seen of him and would be ready to make remarks on such headings as you may furnish me with.

"Turkish atrocities in Jabal Sinjar were at

their zenith and all were desperate and had given up hope of salvation when the late Colonel Leachman as a god-sent angel appeared on the scene. He shone upon us as the full moon on a cloudy night and dispersed the Turkish tyrants with one gallant stroke. It was a critical time in the life of the mountain and Colonel Leachman was just in time to save us from ruin and to break to us the glad tidings of the British occupation of Mosul.

"I was out in a village four hours' distant from the town when Colonel Leachman came, and though I was anxious to see him I was unable to do so. He sent me word to join him at Mosul, and in spite of my old age I welcomed the call and went to him with my following. There we were his guests and were rendered the best hospitality. On seeing him I could not control myself from bending to kiss his hands. Within a week he entrusted to me the governorship of the Jabal so we all started back.

"I performed the duty he entrusted to me to his and everybody's satisfaction. Justice and tranquillity hitherto unknown to the people on account of the oppression of the Turks brought back confidence and things moved quickly to brighten the Jabal and help in its progress.

"I was visited by Colonel Leachman several times and he often expressed his satisfaction at the manifest changes that had taken place; instead of constant disturbances there was now quietness and peace.

"He was—may he rest in peace—an ardent admirer of the Yezidis and was much interested in their welfare and that nothing disturbed them from the outside. He once suggested that we should attack a certain Shammar section which

had been trespassing in the neighbourhood. Hearing that our expedition had been outnumbered, he rode with a detachment to our assistance and soon put the marauders to flight, leaving behind them a number of casualties. Had it not been for his daring action our expedition would have had an extremely rough time.

"This and many other splendid services to our people may be recorded with pride. His dear memory will forever live in our minds and the Jabal Sinjar cannot forget him for generations to come. God have mercy upon him.

"(Signed) HAMO SHARRO,
"Chief of the Jabal Sinjar Yezidis."

It is a fine tribute, this letter from the old chieftain, and shows with unadorned simplicity the love the writer bore for Leachman.

There are sufficient instances in this volume to show that Leachman was an audacious leader of irregular cavalry and that he personally led the attack, and every time successfully, yet we have not a single instance recorded by his own pen or word of mouth.

The conditions prevailing in Mosul province when Leachman was appointed its administrator were quite unprecedented. It is doubtful whether he could have successfully employed any other method of control than that which he adopted, namely, personal contact. It is a pity that the unsettled state of the country forced Leachman to spend so much time quelling disturbances by his own leadership or prestige, and that he was not afforded an opportunity for giving his administrative gifts free play. That he, later on, misjudged the situation which led to the murder of Willey, Macdonald, and Troup, and to the revolt of various sections of the

Kurds, admits of no doubt. Willey shared Leachman's confidence that they could cope with any situation which might arise. Unfortunately they were both wrong and the situation got completely out of hand and troops had to be called in to right matters. Leachman, knowing his own power over unruly elements, possibly thought that others could exercise the same control, especially men of the type of those he had under him ; brave and skilled as his subordinates were, however, they did not possess the uncanny powers and magnetic personality of their leader, so that the murderers of these officers were not held back from their crime by the prestige and boldness Leachman himself possessed.

However that may be, there is no doubt that Leachman was obliged to spend the greater part of his time dealing direct with various chieftains, instead of controlling affairs from his headquarters in Mosul. Had he been able to do so he might have got a clearer picture of the situation, but whether he could have in any way influenced the situation is doubtful.

Leachman remained in charge of the Mosul vilayet until October 1919, when he was superseded by Mr. J. H. H. Bill, I.C.S., an officer of the Indian Political Department with wide experience.

Sir Arnold Wilson gives the reason for the change, in his historical record of events in Mesopotamia, 1917-20, as follows :

“ I had felt for some time that a change was necessary : in dealing with the Arabs, particularly with the nomad tribes, Leachman had qualifications unrivalled in Mesopotamia, and not excelled by any British officer in all Arabia ; he was not, however, at his best with Kurds, just as Soane was never at ease amongst the

company of Ishmail. Each had imbibed some of the social dislikes of the people he knew best. I felt too the need of some one in Mosul who could devote more attention to the administrative side and would keep me better informed of developments. . . . I was perturbed at the apparent lack of insight into the Kurdish psychology disclosed by the circumstances surrounding the murder of Pearson, Willey and Macdonald. Their deaths I felt keenly, for I had known all these officers well."

That Leachman himself did not feel too sure of himself as an administrative officer seems probable, since he wrote to me in May, 1919 :

" I am not at all sure that I am cut out as the ideal political officer ; my methods are too abrupt, but I have a splendid lot of fellows under me."

Nevertheless, the change was not for the better—indeed, it had disastrous results, for one of the first acts Mr. Bill performed, before he was acquainted with the vilayet, was to fine two Zibari chiefs, who, enraged at their treatment, murdered him on November 1 and instigated a rebellion which necessitated the dispatch of a punitive column to quell it. At the end of the operations it was decided to make no further attempt to hold the Zibari country.

It would seem then that Leachman had small chance of succeeding where others had failed, in spite of the British victories. The fact that it was decided to abandon that section of the country would appear to prove that it was impossible to maintain an adequate control without the assistance of troops. These could not be spared owing to commitments in other quarters. The mistake was made in the beginning, when the country was taken

over without sufficient consideration of the magnitude of the undertaking.

In the early summer Leachman proceeded home on leave to England, accompanied by the faithful Hassan.

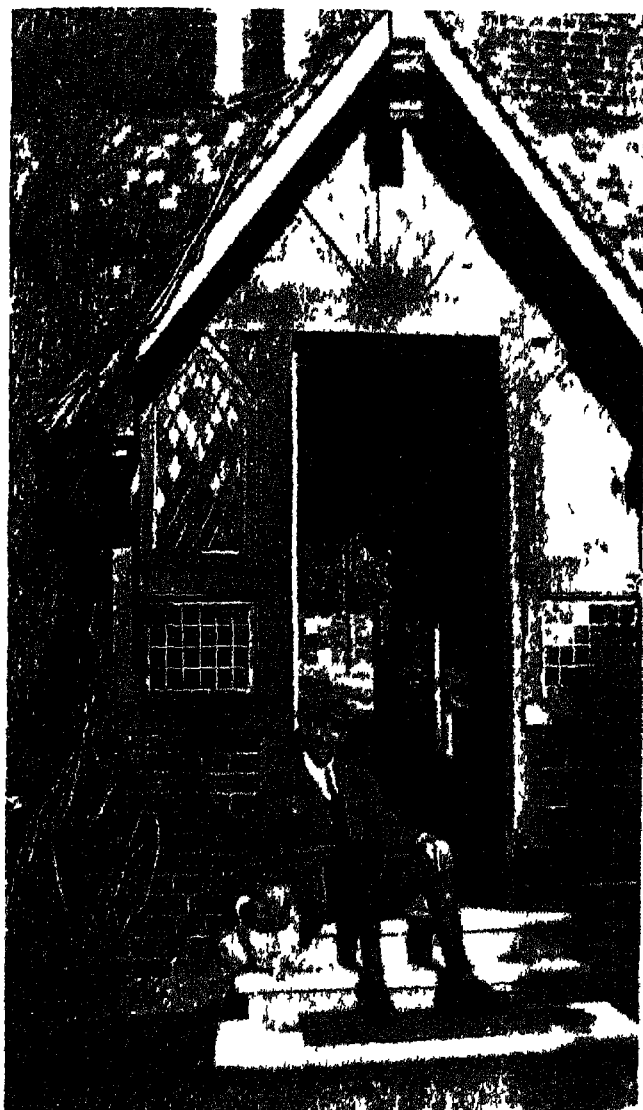
Never was leave more deserved. He was ill and tired, and in the early autumn he entered Sister Agnes's Nursing Home and was operated on for appendicitis. He was very upset, not because he minded the operation itself, but because it curtailed his pleasure and prevented his hunting, which was the greatest disappointment to him of all.

I visited him when he was convalescent and he told me that he had been pressed by publishers to write the story of his adventures. He asked me what I thought about it. I begged him to do so, said that he owed it to his countrymen as a duty. But he finally refused, on the ground that he could not bear the publicity it would entail. So he left England in the middle of January, 1920, taking his car with him and intending to travel with it from Havre to Baghdad.

On January 26 he wrote from Naples giving an account of his run across Europe. He had distinguished company on the cross-Channel boat, "Winston Churchill, Sir Henry Wilson and Lord Beatty. In the early light of Havre they looked exactly like members of a third-class travelling company."

The journey of 1,450 miles was accomplished without special incident and the car "behaved beautifully."

He left Naples by boat on January 28 and reached Alexandria on February 2. Early in March he was back in Baghdad.



LEACHMAN AT HIS HOME IN PETERSFIELD BEFORE
HE WAS RECALLED TO MESOPOTAMIA ON THE
MISSION WHICH LED TO HIS DEATH

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CAUSES OF THE REVOLT IN MESOPOTAMIA

IN order to understand the events with which Leachman was now to be connected, and to appreciate the part he played in them, it will be necessary to give a brief history of the events which led up to the situation as he found it when, at the request of Sir Arnold Wilson, he returned to duty in Mesopotamia in the beginning of 1920.

Up to the end of October, 1918, when the armistice was signed with Turkey, Wilson and his officers had every cause to be satisfied with the results of their labours. Out of the chaos of war they had created ordered government; they had gained the confidence and respect of all classes of the community, not excepting the sheikhs of, normally, unruly and fanatical tribes; the resources of the country had been developed to an astonishing degree; the rich man felt secure in his possessions, the poor man enjoyed the blessings of a justice he had never before experienced. But already in this year, which saw the universal triumph of the Allies' cause, misgivings were beginning to be felt as to what the future held in store, and within two years these doubts had been so played upon by unscrupulous agitators and fanatics that the whole country was plunged into anarchy and bloodshed.

No one connected with Mesopotamian affairs had any doubts regarding the intention of Great Britain to create an independent Arab state; but the actual form the government of the country would take was

as yet an uncertainty. It was, however, assumed that whatever form it took, Great Britain would guide the young state to its maturity.

With the signing of the armistice with Turkey, however, uncertainties began to arise. The British Government, itself, seemed unable to clarify the position. Sir Arnold Wilson thus describes the state of affairs which thereby arose :

“ At no time during the year did any doubts arise in our minds as to our future intentions in Iraq. President Wilson's fourteen points were given to the world on January 8, 1918. The twelfth point stated that ‘ the nationalities now under Turkish rules should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.’ This statement, read in conjunction with statements by spokesmen of the allied countries, that the Allied war aims did not include any desire for the annexation of any country belonging to Turkey, seemed to me to be inconsistent with previous declarations and with such indication of policy as had reached Sir Percy Cox and myself, as, for example, the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In a rash moment I inquired by telegraph what, if any, significance attached to ‘ The Twelfth Commandment,’ and asking what the attitude of Government would be if the nationalities in question desired autonomy under Turkish suzerainty. I was referred, in reply, to the instructions given in August, 1917, that ‘ no large or controversial questions were to be raised.’ Thus discouraged I took no further steps till after the Armistice to inquire of the India Office what, in their view, the future might hold in store. I presumed, perhaps

rightly, that if the Oracles were dumb, it was because their doubts were even greater than ours. Our duty as the 'men on the spot' seemed clear—to go ahead and, to the best of our ability, to re-create out of the wreckage of war a system of civil administration adequate to the needs of the people of Iraq, so that when peace should come they might seek, not vainly, to trace the pathway to a fitting destiny."

The generous words with which this quotation is concluded would serve as a fitting epitaph on the graves of those British officers who perished during the revolt in Mesopotamia, many of them foully murdered, in giving effect to this noble conception of their task. They faced death, solitary and deserted, each another Gordon in the splendour of their passing, each upholding the honour of England. These simple words should, moreover, be pondered over by those whose destiny led them to co-operate with the Sherifian forces on the Palestinian front, certain of whom considered their duty to be far different. They were totally ignorant of the conditions existing in Mesopotamia, yet they did not hesitate to voice their opinion as to the ineptitude, as they judged it, of the civil administration in that country and to encourage Feisal's officers to remedy it. They were carried away by their enthusiasm for the Arab cause, which appeared to have triumphed in Syria. Yet they forgot, or ignored, the fact that that triumph had been made possible by the Imperial forces and not by Arab endeavour. They appeared to think that the French would abandon their claim to the control in Syria. Their advice to their Arab friends was well-meaning perhaps, but it was suicidal, alike for the Arabs in Syria and for those in Mesopotamia.

Unfortunately their confidence in the security of the Arab position, in the sphere in which they were so closely connected, created in the minds of Feisal's following a totally false impression. Thinking that the Arab kingdom of Syria was now an established fact, the extremists, especially those who were of Mesopotamian origin, saw no reason why a sister kingdom could not be equally well established in the country of their birth. They were led to believe that the only bar to the realization of their hopes was the civil administration in Mesopotamia, which was, they conceived, acting against the wishes of the people of Great Britain and the Allies as a whole. They therefore proceeded, through the medium of the Al Ahad Secret Society, to undermine its authority and to incite the unstable elements to rebel against the constituted authority which had been provisionally established. In this they were assisted by other events and circumstances which will now be described.

The trouble in Mesopotamia, as has been said, began with the signing of the armistice with Turkey on October 30, 1918. The terms of the armistice itself created misunderstandings. They were loosely worded, so much so, in fact, that the Turks had no difficulty in interpreting the conditions laid down in a totally different manner to that intended by the British signatories. The result was that a very serious doubt remained on all manner of questions and especially as to the extent of the territories which were to be evacuated by the Turkish forces. Furthermore, only the final Peace Treaty would definitely establish what territories Turkey was to surrender *in perpetuo*, and the signing of the treaty was long delayed. Especially was this the case with the vilayet of Mosul. Indeed, it may be stated at once that the actual confines of that province were

not finally agreed upon until they had been delimited by the International Boundary Commission sent out by the League of Nations in 1924. This delay, which prevented anything in the form of a permanent administration being set up in the doubtful areas, enabled Turkish propaganda to foster the belief that Turkey would reoccupy territories which she had only been obliged to relinquish temporarily.

Nothing could have been more calculated to create an atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty in the minds of a fairly large and influential section of the population than this insidious suggestion, for a large section of the people feared to express themselves as being friends to the British lest the returning Turks might revenge themselves on their lives and property in their usual manner. But the danger which threatened Mesopotamia from the west was of a more positive nature.

Almost simultaneously with the signing of the armistice with Turkey, Feisal's government had been enthroned in Damascus. The boundaries of his kingdom on the east were as ill-defined as were those of the vilayet of Mosul.

The extreme Nationalists, therefore, claimed Dair az Zor as being part of Syria. The significance of this manœuvre will be apparent when the real objects they had in mind are disclosed.

The town of Dair az Zor is situated on the Euphrates some 400 miles from Baghdad. Neither the military nor the civil authorities in Mesopotamia desired to extend their responsibilities so far; but it seemed dangerous to leave a sort of "no man's land" between Syria and Mesopotamia within easy reach of the Turks. The inhabitants of the town had at the end of November clamoured for the despatch of a British officer from Baghdad to maintain law and order.

After reference to the British Government, an officer, Captain Carver, was dispatched there on December 13. When he reached Albu Kemal he learnt to his astonishment that a deputy governor with a subordinate staff and some forty gendarmes had already reached the town, having been sent there at the instigation of the extremists in Syria, who had likewise instructed them to occupy Ana which lay unquestionably well within Mesopotamian territory. Meantime an Arab governor, sent under the same aegis had reached Dair az Zor itself, and was busily engaged in appointing a number of Arab officials and in the enrolment of gendarmes at salaries far in excess of those being paid in Mesopotamia. The funds paid to Feisal by the British Treasury were thus partly employed to bribe the inhabitants of Dair az Zor, and to create discontent among the subordinate officials in British employ in other parts.

The confusion which resulted from this double uncertainty at Mosul and Dair az Zor may well be imagined. For two full years the wretched Wilson had to deal with a situation which was fraught with dangers but which he was helpless to control. The fate of the country and even its boundaries lay outside his jurisdiction. He saw a poisonous intrigue, made possible by the illegitimate use of funds supplied to Feisal by the British Government, permeating the country and sapping its moral fibre. He watched the dangerous reduction of military strength necessary for the protection of his political officers and the maintenance of law and order. He warned the military authorities in Iraq. His representations went unheeded. Seldom has a British pro-consul been placed in so unenviable a position, for "... with the beginnings of the negotiations for the Peace Treaty," writes Professor H. W. V. Tem-

perley in *The History of the Peace Conference in Paris*, "the problem of Iraq ceased to be a local administrative problem and became part of a world-wide political problem."

In other words, the momentous question of the future status of the country would be decided in Paris and not in Baghdad or in London.

On November 8, 1918, a declaration was published simultaneously in Paris, London, New York and Cairo, promising the indigenous populations of Syria and Mesopotamia the establishment of national governments adopted by their free-will. This declaration was taken everywhere as abrogating the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which virtually had partitioned the possession of Turkey between France, Russia and England, and as being in conformity with General Maude's proclamation, issued on the taking of Baghdad, and in harmony with the general policy of Great Britain.

Nevertheless, its vagueness was an added danger to an already delicate situation. Various interested parties proceeded to interpret it in a manner best suited to their own ambitions.

The inhabitants of Mesopotamia now found themselves in a most unenviable position. The civil administration to whom they looked for guidance was in a worse plight, for it had to maintain an authority for which it apparently had no mandate. The political officers were constrained to maintain an inexplicable silence or reply enigmatically to anxious questionings.

Outside Mesopotamia the different parties, discussing the future of the country, viewed the matter through spectacles of varying shades. At the Peace Conference in Paris, at the Foreign Office and the India Office in London, at the Arab Bureau in Cairo, the self-constituted authority on Arabian affairs,

views were expressed which differed in every important particular and which displayed a total ignorance of local conditions. Even as late as August 1920, the late T. E. Lawrence, writing in the *Observer*, said : " It would be child's play for a decent man to run Mesopotamia, so long as he ran it like Cromer's Egypt, not like the Egypt of the Protectorate."

Making due allowance for the fact that the writer was woefully ignorant of the greater part of Arabia, one would have imagined that he would have been aware of so self-evident a fact that Mesopotamia had problems to solve of population, religions, territory and defence which were of unparalleled complexity and which required the most delicate handling. Unfortunately Arabian affairs were judged in general by Sherifian standards, and while these matters affecting the welfare of Mesopotamia were being discussed in this confusing and dilatory manner, Feisal's government was functioning in Syria. Under whose authority it was established, strangely enough, no one has had the courage to explain. Lawrence was, he has told us, its *de facto* head, but who appointed him ? A number of British officers acted in the capacity of advisers. They advocated the creation of a similar government in Mesopotamia. The British Treasury contributed large sums of money to Feisal's exchequer. Large sums were used to foster unrest in Mesopotamia, and thousands of rifles despatched to arm the tribesmen there. Arms and ammunition had been and were still being provided to the Syrian government in lavish quantities. The British officers associated with Feisal cannot therefore be absolved from a part of the blame which must be attached to those who caused such unnecessary suffering and bloodshed in Mesopotamia, for the revolt in that country was due principally to the activities of Feisal's officers.

As late as May 1920, Feisal's following had received, or undoubtedly thought they had received, tacit, if not explicit, encouragement to confirm their sovereignty of an independent Arab state in Syria, and to resist the authority of the French as the Mandatory Power in that country. Again it may be asked who encouraged them in so perilous a conception?

Many of Feisal's officers were of Mesopotamian origin. They saw no reason, therefore, why Arab nationalist ambitions should, apparently, be satisfied in Syria and denied them in Mesopotamia.

On May 1, 1920, at the San Remo Conference, Great Britain accepted the mandate for Mesopotamia, and although under its terms she declared her firm intention to promote the creation therein of a form of administration based upon representative indigenous institutions, the so-called nationalists in Feisal's employ, who had been engineering a revolt in Mesopotamia for over a year, considered, or so pretended, that Arab aspirations could be satisfied with nothing less than complete and immediate independence. They therefore violently advocated its rejection, and that in spite of the fact that an overwhelming mass of public opinion in Mesopotamia had not only expressed themselves as favouring the guiding hand of Great Britain over the initial stages of their destiny, but viewed with dismay the possibility of her abandoning this duty.

This conflict of opinion among the Arabs themselves would at first sight appear to be inexplicable, until we come to inquire as to who these extremists were, when the explanation is at once manifest.

One of the most prominent of these was Yasin Pasha,¹ who had been taken prisoner on the fall of Damascus, and had exchanged his high position in the Turkish Army for that of Feisal's Chief of Staff.

Another was Ramadhan al Shallash, by origin a *mukhtar* (headman) of one of the local tribes in the neighbourhood of Dair az Zor. A third was Maulud Pasha al Khalaf, who had previously commanded a Turkish division in Damascus, while the Sherifian agents who reached Dair az Zor, in May 1920, and murdered Captain Stuart and Sergeants Lawlor and Walker, were all former Turkish officers who had been for two years previously in the employ of Feisal's Damascus government.² In other words, the chief protagonists of Arab Nationalism in Mesopotamia were in Feisal's employ and were men whose patriotism had burst into flame only when their late employers had suffered utter defeat. It was only then that they remembered the oppression their countrymen had suffered. These were the men whose belated patriotism caused them to murder or incite others to murder those who had been instrumental in their deliverance, and who with unselfish devotion had worked for their welfare and happiness. They were men, moreover, who, having served the Turks during the war—we except Ramadhan al Shallash, who had deserted the Turks at Medina—were totally ignorant of the changes which had taken place in Mesopotamia and in the views of the vast majority of its inhabitants. The risks they ran in fermenting unrest were negligible. They were protected by their position with Feisal. They were encouraged by their British advisers to set up an independent kingdom of which Feisal's brother Abdulla was proclaimed king. They were emboldened by the fostered belief that the British people would not intervene. Circumstances favoured them, and they were not long in starting their agitation.

Their real objectives now stand revealed. By claiming that Dair az Zor lay within the Syrian

frontier they obtained an advance post from which they would be in touch with their adherents in Mesopotamia and with the tribes which they hoped to incite to rebellion. They could claim the protection of Feisal's government, and would, they assumed, be immune from attack by the military authorities of Mesopotamia. From this secure base they could organize an armed force to support their activities, with the money and arms supplied by Britain, without let or hindrance. They quickly gained touch with those elements in Mesopotamia which they knew to be opposed to British control in any form ; such as the Muhtahids of Karbela, Najaf and Kadhimain, who had immense influence among the Shia population and who feared any form of constitutional government which would of necessity curtail their rapacious cruelty. The pro-Turk party, who hoped for the return of the Turks and were encouraged in their hopes by a heavily financed Turkish propaganda, was ready to co-operate in any enterprise likely to embarrass the British, and some of the sheikhs of the tribes whose depredations had been prevented were easily persuaded that their full authority would be restored.

By February, 1919, their pernicious propaganda was in full swing throughout Mesopotamia. An alliance had been made between the usually irreconcilable Shias and Sunnis, for the Nationalists realized that they would have to present to the people of Mesopotamia, at any rate outwardly, a form of Islamic unity, and they found staunch allies in the priesthood who used arguments which were intelligible to the most ignorant and appealed to religious fanaticism in its most virulent form.

On a strong British protest to Feisal's government the agitators were temporarily withdrawn from Dair az Zor, only to appear again on December 11, when

Ramadhan al Shallash instigated the tribes to open rebellion, so that they entered the town from the south and engaged in indiscriminate looting. They were eventually ejected by officers sent by Feisal in the middle of January, 1919, but Shallash did not depart before he had attacked Albu Kemal with the aid of the tribesmen, who looted the houses of Arabs in British service and violated their women, hoping by such ruthless means to intimidate those Arabs who were assisting the British in the administration of the country.

Nor were matters improved when Ramadhan al Shallash was superseded by Maulud Pasha al Khalaf, who immediately engaged in propaganda of an even more virulent kind.

His letters reached the tribes as far down as Amara, and he appeared to be amply supplied with funds, which he distributed among those sheikhs whom he thought would be most likely to cause disturbance. Since Maulud Pasha had been sent officially by Feisal's government, it is quite clear, in spite of Feisal's denials, that the agitation was being carried on with the tacit consent of the Syrian government. This receives further confirmation from the fact that when further expostulations were made by the British Government to Feisal, which was accompanied by the threat to discontinue the subsidy being paid to him, Maulud's activities increased in violence.^a Led by Arab officers, the tribesmen, whose fury Maulud pretended he was unable to restrain, attacked Albu Kemal in February and made constant raids on British lines of communication. He increased the fanatical propaganda in the religious centres and permitted Ramadhan al Shallash to return. Small wonder, then, that a few months later the country was in seething revolt.

Never has a rebellion been fomented with less

justification ; seldom, if ever, have valuable lives been so ruthlessly and needlessly sacrificed. Never has courage by men of the British race been so heroically displayed. Never has such sacrifice received so little recognition.

Wilson and his political officers deserve our liveliest sympathy. They were set an impossible task. Unable, in the interests of their country to justify their actions either to their Arab friends or to their detractors, they bore, without murmur, the obloquy to which they were exposed from all quarters, in many cases being denied even the minimum of military support. They just "carried on." Wilson himself set a noble example. Time and again he visited the very centre of a disturbance, either to encourage some isolated political officer, or to use his influence with the rebels. Fortified by a passage from *Bacon's Essays* and by his strong sense of religious duty, he exposed himself over and over again to assassination, and when order was finally restored and he had been invited by His Majesty's Government to establish the new constitution, with generous abnegation he handed over the task of reconstruction to Sir Percy Cox, believing that the welfare and happiness of the country would in this manner be best promoted.

Only the foolhardy bravery of such men as Leachman staved off an irretrievable disaster and prevented an even greater loss of life. Leachman reached Baghdad early in March, 1920, and was informed fully of the position we have described. But before he left England he was aware of the seriousness of the situation. He had received an invitation to return and he did not hesitate an instant in accepting it. But he knew that he was going to his death. Some premonition warned him that he would not return. "I feel sure they will get

me," he said to me; and when implored not to expose himself to death any further, he replied simply: "Oh! but you see they need me." Duty was to Leachman a religion. He could no more shirk it than he could deny his faith.

See "*Mesopotamia, 1917-1920*" by Lt-Col. Sir Arnold Wilson,
K.C.I.L., D.S.O.

¹ Page 228

² Page 273

³ Page 236

CHAPTER XXV

THE ARAB REBELLION MARCH—AUGUST 1920

EARLY in March, 1920, Leachman was back in Mesopotamia. He was killed on August 12 of that year. Meagre as are our records of that short period of five months, they are of breathless interest.

Leachman's work during this period is of itself sufficient to place him among the heroes of all time. He was an army in himself. His revenge on those who rebelled was swift, unexpected and terrible—but the occasion demanded it. He stood out in the midst of a raging sea of fire and bloodshed like a pillar of granite—hard, inflexible, unassailable. His courage was superhuman, inspired, and it was sustained, not for one incident, not for an hour or for a day, but for months on end. He quenched the fires of revolt within his own district and until his death kept inviolate 200 miles of the Euphrates frontier. In spite of his ruthlessness his prestige never stood so high and, as the late Miss Gertrude Bell wrote of him, "He had the hearty co-operation of the leading sheikhs, and if they winced somewhat under his 'strong hand,' the fact remains that along the whole line of the Upper Euphrates the British writ ran uninterrupted when communications with Baghdad were intermittent, or non-existent."

When Leachman reached Baghdad early in 1920, Feisal had just been declared King of Syria, and an assembly of persons of Iraqi origin at Damascus had proclaimed his brother King of Iraq.

Sherifian propaganda was raging all along the Euphrates and the priests at the holy cities of Karbela and Najaf had fanned the glowing embers of fanaticism into a raging furnace both in the cities and among the neighbouring tribes. The forces at the disposal of the military were insufficient to deal adequately with the situation, a fact well known to the Sherifian extremists; a most valuable portion of the army of occupation had been sent to Persia for operations under General Ironside in the north. Demobilization was well advanced and the majority of available troops were new recruits from India with no war experience. Nevertheless, they fought with splendid gallantry and achieved the most astounding successes, notably in Kurdistan, where in a few weeks in the hottest time of the year they established a supremacy which the Turks had never succeeded in doing.

They completely subjugated the Kurdish rebels and marched as unquestioned victors through the heart of Kurdistan. But the small garrisons scattered about Mesopotamia were a danger rather than a protection, since their inevitable withdrawal was regarded as a manifest sign of the impotence of British power. Leachman was sent post haste to Ramadi as Political Officer of the Dulaim Division. Here, however, he only stopped long enough to drop his heavier belongings before proceeding by aeroplane, accompanied by the ever faithful Hassan, to 200 miles further up the river to Albu Kemal, which was the centre of the trouble. He immediately set about the work of pacifying the district in co-operation with the military. No sooner had he landed than he got into touch with his Arab friends, collected a body of horsemen and, putting himself at their head, as was his invariable custom, he burst like a tornado on the villages of the rebels and defeated

them after a severe encounter. He describes the incident as follows in a letter home from Albu Kemal.

“March 16, 1920 :

“I am now up at the front. I went from Baghdad to Ramadi, dropped my kit and then came on here, 200 miles up the Euphrates. The last 80 miles were unsafe, so they sent down an aeroplane for me. It was nice to fly again over good ground. Hassan came up with me in another 'plane, but he did not like the idea at first. This place was besieged just before I got here and we are now 'learning' the gentle Arabian who caused the trouble. The day after we got here we went out thirty miles further up the river and found the local Arabs doing the 'peaceful' cultivation stunt. An old trick of semi-civilized tribes who, when they see our men approaching, hastily conceal their weapons and grasp their sickles and, posing as harmless and industrious husbandmen, wait for the passing of the danger, when once more the crops are abandoned for murder, rapine and loot. So we burned ten miles of huts, drove in all their cattle, destroyed everything we could see and, incidentally, slew a few Arabs who got in the way. The result is that they now want to make peace. They are the lowest of the low, but quite dangerous. They have killed six officers in ten days and stood up to us in a fight in which we counted sixty of their dead on the ground. I shall have to stay up here until I get them in hand and shall then go back to Ramadi. I daresay you may have seen by the time this reaches you we are not in for a very easy time out here. Why we should wish to keep the particular part of

Mesopotamia I am in defeats me.¹ The country is an absolute waste except for a very narrow strip along the Euphrates, and there are no big towns except Dair az Zor, a little further up the river, in which the Arab government are sitting. Hassan did not survive two days in Baghdad without getting into mischief. He took to the bottle one night and I found him at two in the morning in the 'lock up.' He insisted to me that he was quite sober, but, as he would talk to me in Hindustani, I had to presume that he was not. He was not very bad, however, and I let him off."

When Leachman left, peace had been restored. The repentant tribesmen sat among the blackened ruins of their homes, wondering how it had come about that a seemingly unending period for increasing their possessions at the expense of others, had been so suddenly and drastically curtailed.

He next turned his attention to the Agaidat tribes, who had risen in the neighbourhood of Dair az Zor. He sent an urgent request to his friends, the Anaiza, for a force to suppress them, and, again putting himself in command, by an all night march of sixty miles he surprised the rebels at dawn. He attacked them ruthlessly before they had time to collect in strength, and forced their submission, inflicting a heavy fine of money, rifles, sheep and cattle which he immediately collected. He burnt the rifles and gave the sheep and cattle as a reward to his Bedouin "army." Fahed Bey, paramount chief of the Anaiza, thus laconically reports the incident. "On his return from London the Agaidat tribes had risen in Dair az Zor and he took men from the Anaiza to help the forces punish the rebels."

At the end of March Leachman made Salahiya

¹ The explanation has been given in the previous chapter.

the centre of his activities, and he was beginning to get a grip of the situation.

“ I am still in the forefront of the battle ; in fact I have the honour of being now in our most advanced post on the Euphrates, only about forty miles from Dair az Zor. Thanks to most vigorous methods we have nearly quelled this particular outbreak and the people are paying up their fines. I shall be able to go back to Ramadi in a few days probably. . . . I had a long journey last week. A party of our heaven-born political officers were making their way across the desert from Hit to Damascus, a way I have been many times. They had tents and lumber with them of all sorts, and a raiding party came down on them and stripped them to the skin. I had to go out and find them and drove a car 150 miles into the desert and brought them back. They were on their way home, so they are not much nearer now. I have two of Wilson's particular blue-eyed boys under me. They are both perfectly useless and look at me as if I was a strange beast. One cannot help being a muddy-minded soldier. I have had no letters. Apparently letters don't go nowadays. At least, there are no postal arrangements up this line. I will send this by aeroplane to Baghdad tomorrow. I don't know if that is much better, as all our 'planes are rotten and crash all over the country. I went to the camp of my own special Bedouin tribe the other day and had a great reception, as they had heard that I had been killed. They were very disgusted to hear that I had not bought a wife while at home. They say I must make the best of it with an Arab damsel ”

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the centre of his activities, and he was beginning to get a grip of the situation.

" I am still in the forefront of the battle ; in fact I have the honour of being now in our most advanced post on the Euphrates, only about forty miles from Dair az Zor. Thanks to most vigorous methods we have nearly quelled this particular outbreak and the people are paying up their fines. I shall be able to go back to Ramadi in a few days probably. . . . I had a long journey last week. A party of our heaven-born political officers were making their way across the desert from Hit to Damascus, a way I have been many times. They had tents and lumber with them of all sorts, and a raiding party came down on them and stripped them to the skin. I had to go out and find them and drove a car 150 miles into the desert and brought them back. They were on their way home, so they are not much nearer now. I have two of Wilson's particular blue-eyed boys under me. They are both perfectly useless and look at me as if I was a strange beast. One cannot help being a muddy-minded soldier. I have had no letters. Apparently letters don't go nowadays. At least, there are no postal arrangements up this line. I will send this by aeroplane to Baghdad tomorrow. I don't know if that is much better, as all our 'planes are rotten and crash all over the country. I went to the camp of my own special Bedouin tribe the other day and had a great reception, as they had heard that I had been killed. They were very disgusted to hear that I had not bought a wife while at home. They say I must make the best of it with an Arab damsel."

The letter speaks for itself and gives us an insight into the difficulties with which Leachman had to contend. But it contains two unintentional tributes to his prestige and fame. Others would be raided, shot at and robbed, but this amazing man could venture alone into the perils of the desert and rescue others less fortunate. How many did he succour in this manner? How many did he deliver from captivity? No record has been kept. A few examples will be given in the following pages. But if Leachman was within reach, it was to him all men turned in their distress, and unless death intervened, as happened on an occasion to be related, he never failed them. The reader must have already been struck by the manner in which Leachman's services were called upon in all sorts of emergencies, some of which appeared to be quite outside his province. He was always sent to the focal point of every danger. No one ever seemed to consider that they were asking him to perform something which was almost impossible. Yet though no one doubted that he would succeed, but few realized the risks they were asking him to take; and, since he always carried out the task set him, the wonder of his performances ceased to astonish and they came to be regarded as everyday acts of his existence. We can trace no record of his having been thanked, nor of his having been rewarded. His D.S.O. was gained in military operations under the eye of superior officers, but, except for the fact that his name is imperishable, his countless acts of heroism seemed to have been considered as mere matters of routine.

How great, too, was the esteem in which he was held by the great Anaiza tribe who rejoiced so greatly to find him still alive; who, fearing for his life, begged him to take a wife, even if she should be an Arab maid, so that an heir should bear his name

and inherit the qualities and emulate the deeds of his father ; who called their children " Leachman," hoping the name would endow them with the courage and rectitude of the man who bore it.

This spontaneous outburst of affection by men who seldom betrayed their feeling must have been a solace to the lonely, tired man. It must, indeed, have heartened him in the performance of his heavy and dangerous task, for it was formidable in the extreme. Never, in the whole course of his extraordinary career, did he display such hardihood, such reckless bravery, and such unceasing activity. No one knew how, or when, he rested. There was no part of the great area he did not visit, appearing as if by magic in different places at all hours of the day and night. His appearances were so sudden and he travelled so fast that he seemed to be everywhere at once. He never seemed to rest or sleep, and he ate just what Hassan could provide at a moment's notice. In a few weeks his dynamic personality had made itself felt ; he soon obtained control of the district and performed single-handed what a strong military force would have required weeks of fighting to accomplish. His mere presence was sometimes sufficient to halt a tribal force. His very name was a more potent influence for peace than were the bribes of the Sherifian officers for war.

Having changed the situation so dramatically, Leachman returned to Ramadi where he found " Carver and a nice lot of young officers, though not one of them is over 25." Here he collected round him his old staff of servants, horses and dogs from Mosul. He loved comfort, and always his first step in taking up his quarters in a town was to settle himself in as comfortably as he could. He was very particular. He collected furniture, and the house he occupied was invariably made spotlessly clean.

He paid special attention to the cooking and always managed to have a good table. All this he proceeded to do despite the seriousness of the situation. When all was as perfect as conditions allowed he opened his house to all and sundry. His hospitality was unbounded, and his generosity, to British and Arab alike, only limited by his means and opportunities.

As soon as he was installed at Ramadi he at once got his qucer intelligence service going, as usual employing a number of children. His office became a centre of the greatest activity. There was a constant stream of every class of individual, simple Bedouin, sheikhs, townsmen and British officers. Suddenly Leachman would be gone—it might be for a few hours, it might be for a day or longer. His intelligence service had informed him of a possible danger, of a raid by hostile Arabs, of the restlessness of a tribe. He acted instantly. Only he could deal with the situation. He knew every individual and every sheikh. He knew their characters and the way to deal with each of them. His methods were direct; there was no subterfuge about them. Some men he abused, some he beat, some he rewarded, but he was famed throughout Arabia for his justice; and whether he inflicted a beating or dealt out a reward, it was fully merited. In spite of his violence, his kindness knew no bounds. If the sheikhs were loyal, if they were true, he protected their interests and gave them his wonderful friendship, which is valued by them as a treasured memory to this very day. His task was desperately hard, but he kept the peace in his own district when elsewhere all was in turmoil.

Towards the end of April he was again without Hassan, but this time through no fault of the latter, as he had had to be sent to hospital at Ramadi for

an operation after a long period of illness. Another Hassan was in attendance as his understudy, and Leachman was beginning to see his own future more clearly, as Wilson had offered him a three-year contract of service in the Mesopotamian administration at "a princely salary"; "it is not bad as things go, and I shall probably accept it. I can always terminate it on giving three months' notice." Meanwhile he was having some difficulty in getting the last section of the Albu Kemal tribes to pay up its fine, in spite of regular bombing, "which they don't seem to mind much." Also he was far from satisfied with his staff: "a weird lot of officers. . . . They are none of them gentlemen, all extremely ignorant and loathed by the military. Someone in Baghdad seems a bad judge of character in spite of divine inspiration¹ (I except Carver who is with me)."

In spite of Leachman's ceaseless activities, in spite of his superhuman endeavours, it was finally decided to evacuate all the country between Dair az Zor and Ana; even Albu Kemal was surrendered. North of the latter place the country had been "pacified," the last fines extracted and England's honour had been vindicated, whereupon Leachman visited the Arab authorities at Dair to arrange to hand over to them all the territory for which they had been fighting for three months.

Leachman had so far been in the forefront of the battle-line. He had now to lead a retreat. It was a responsible task. A withdrawal in the face of an active enemy is always a serious undertaking. It was doubly so in the present instance. A mixed

¹ Leachman was not aware of the fact that officers who had been lent to the Mesopotamian administration were being recalled wholesale, a fact which added considerably to Wilson's difficulties, for he was depleted of some of his best officers just when he needed them most, and had the greatest difficulty in replacing them.

brigade hampered, with its sick and wounded and non-combatants, had to be brought in safely through seventy miles of country occupied by powerful and well-armed tribes, who had been held in check with the greatest difficulty, who now beheld in this retreat the collapse of British power. They rushed to arms on the northern flank. The rear of the column was threatened by the Sherifian agents, supported by regulars from Aleppo and tribesmen lashed into fanaticism by their propaganda. Leachman led the column, not along the usual route but by one further to the south and known only to himself. Instead, therefore, of passing through the middle of hostile territory, he left it on the left flank, which manœuvre secured the other flank. The move was unexpected so that surprise gave the column valuable time, and it was well on its way before its march was discovered. Nevertheless, it was threatened for the greater part of the march. Leachman divided his time in directing the column and securing its left flank and rear. Assisted by friendly Arabs, by the armoured cars and aeroplanes, the enemy were kept well away from the line of march. Leachman was continually under fire, first on one part of the field where danger threatened most and then, when the pressure was relieved, at another. Finally he conducted the column to safety without loss, and once more a body of British troops owed their safety to Leachman's knowledge of the country and to his untiring energy and courage. That happened at the beginning of May, and the Arabs in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates were duly impressed by the outward and visible semblance of an Arab victory organized from Damascus. The result was scarcely surprising.

"We are really having most exciting times. When we left Albu Kemal the whole country

seemed to arise and go for us and we had a very stiff fight all the way back to Ana, 70 miles. There are raiders out all over the place at the present time, but we are now in a position to deal with them. I spend hours in the air bombing camps and Arabs. The brightest spot we have had for many a long day was when early one morning we bumped across 25 Arabians asleep in a hole in the ground. We enjoyed ourselves immensely. I can see no end to this turmoil and, though it is strenuous, uncomfortable and dangerous, it is better than sitting in an office. The young gentlemen give us no assistance whatever. I have no officers and never get anything I ask for. Meanwhile the young gentlemen drink in the club. . . . My conduct of operations up here is worth about thirty shillings a month. I have lost the knack. It must have been in my appendix." This incidentally he had had removed during his last leave home.

When the troops had been finally withdrawn, it was left to Leachman to maintain order and prevent the spread of the revolt along the Euphrates valley. Brilliantly he carried out his mission, but peace was only assured by superhuman efforts on his part. His difficulties were, as will be readily understood, increased a hundredfold by the virtual surrender to the Sherifian agents. He had to counteract their undoubted success by a display of iron determination which would so impress those sheikhs still in our jurisdiction that they would not waver in their allegiance, in spite of the pressure being exercised upon them, and in spite of bribes lavishly bestowed from money supplied by the British taxpayer.

Meanwhile, in spite of the fact that they had

caused the evacuation of Albu Kemal, Syrian agents had found their plans thwarted on the Euphrates by this indomitable man, and looked for an area where there were better prospects of success and where Leachman's strong arm could not strike, and so they turned their attention to the Mosul division, the very spear-head of the British position in Mesopotamia, whence all news received indicated a situation of growing gravity. The authorities at home were still unable to ease the situation by a clear declaration of policy. Those who were friendly to us, and they were in a vast majority, were aghast at the turn of events and at Wilson's, to them, inexplicable silence. The only consolation Wilson had was the bestowal of a knighthood as a testimony that he had the confidence of the British Government.

After leading the column to safety Leachman remained with the troops at Ana and kept the district quiet. By the beginning of June peace seemed established and the tribes and insurgents cowed. Leachman felt therefore that he might return to his headquarters at Ramadi. No sooner was his strong hand removed, however, than the disturbance broke violently out again, and he himself had to fight his way back to Ramadi in an armoured car, and then had to return to Ana by aeroplane to quiet this new outbreak. "It is rather a desperate state of affairs," he wrote on June 5, "but I thrive on it, though I would be happier if they could give us a little more help from Baghdad." Little he knew that Baghdad was itself straining every effort to avert a catastrophe.

Still Leachman kept control: "My division are still good boys and the rest of Mespot is in an appalling state of disorder," he wrote. In the early part of July he was sent to make a preliminary survey for a railway. They travelled by car, covering 500

miles. He described his journey in a letter written from Ramadi on July 20.

"It is rather wonderful doing a trip in four days by car over trackless desert, which before would have taken a fortnight on a camel. It is not very safe proceeding at this time of year as the whole desert is absolutely covered with raiding-parties. I expect the next move will be a reconnaissance right across to Jerusalem, in which case I shall get a few days at Cairo. . . . I should like to see another two divisions sent out here and a regular slaughter of the Arabs in the disaffected areas. It is the only way I think. Of all my kingdom Ramadi is the least desirable spot. It is certainly hotter than any other town, being a little way off the river. . . . I am sure it will infuriate Mil. (his sister) to know that I am entitled to no war-gratuity while in the civil administration, so I only draw it as a captain. Rather rude, isn't it? Major Eadie . . . is one of my officers. We must understand his mentality. He is a very good sort and has a temper almost worse than my own.

"We are still in the throes of internal strife. The whole of Mesopotamia seems to be fighting. I am thankful to say that my people have behaved excellently so far. I have no troops and am holding the 150 miles between here (Ramadi) and the frontier with tribesmen. Carver is alone with 400 cut-throats at Ana 130 miles up, and I have officers dotted about in places. I had an amazing escape last Sunday (August 1). I had gone to a town of mine sixty miles out in the desert (? Rahhaliya) and received a despairing moan from the Arab governor of another place (? Shithatha) further on and not in my

district. I went on there and drove up to the gate of the fort and found it occupied by the enemy. They were as startled as I was and gave me time to turn round, but they gave it to me very hot indeed getting away. I had to go along a narrow embankment and there was a donkey in the road which absolutely refused to budge, so I charged it with the car, knocked it down and drove over the top of it. I am now busy getting my own back and I have got the place, which has 8,000 people in it, cut off from everywhere else by tribesmen. They will, I hope, be sorry they shot at me. Hassan was excellent and returned a heavy fire from the car. I regret he has fallen from grace. He drinks heavily and is a general nuisance. He is at present absent, and I believe has gone to Baghdad. I understand I am to go across to Palestine with a railway survey almost at once. It is madness to leave my district at such a time. . . . It will be a change ; I have very nearly had as much of this as I can stand."

This is the first occasion in the whole of Leachman's correspondence on which he complained. Yet he had justification, for the strain was becoming unbearable. Still with grim tenacity he maintained the peace in his own district and answered another desperate call for assistance from outside. On August 6 he wrote the letter quoted, the last of which we have any record.

Chance once more provides the opportunity to compare Leachman's letter with the actual happening. The town to which he referred was Shithatha, to which reference has already been made. As he states, the appeal for assistance was sent by the Arab governor he had himself installed there but

it was prompted by Leachman's enemies and encouraged by the Syrian extremists whose agents were in the town.

Leachman had brought their activities on the Euphrates practically to a standstill; they were determined to kill him. They got ready help from those elements in Shithatha whom Leachman had removed from office when he had captured the place two years previously. The urgent messages for assistance having been despatched, they made the most careful and elaborate preparations to bring about his death. They barricaded the square of the town and had a hundred rifles ready to pour into it a hail of lead at the psychological moment when Leachman arrived. The narrow entrance was to be barred in his rear.

It is quite correct that Leachman's arrival was unexpected, for all his movements were, and he appeared before they noticed his approach. As soon as he reached the town, however, the conspirators rushed to their places of concealment.

Leachman drove, at first unsuspectingly, towards the square, when some uncanny sense warned him of his peril. In a flash he turned his car down one of the narrow alleys off the main street, where there was hardly room for his car, but the ambushers were momentarily thrown into confusion by his sudden action. Nevertheless, a fusillade of shots followed him as he drove madly for the exit. By great good fortune none of the bullets caused sufficient damage to his car to stay his progress.

Leachman made light of the episode in his letter to his people, but it is no wonder that he had had very nearly as much as he could stand. The strain of the perpetual dangers to which he had been exposed for several years had been a sufficiently ghastly experience. The present unrest increased

these dangers a hundredfold. Every street corner, every rock on the hills, each hollow in the desert and even his room at Ramadi, were possible places of concealment for an assassin. His vigilance could never be relaxed. His whole mode of life was abnormal. No wonder he rejoiced at getting his own back, as he expresses it, or revelled in dropping bombs on Arabs concealed in a hollow in the ground. Such incidents must have caused a temporary relaxing of nerves stretched to breaking point. It is a pity he has not told us what happened when he retook Shithatha with 8,000 of his friends, no doubt the Anaiza. It seems astonishing that events of this nature should be buried in oblivion, or that he never sent in an official report. But that was Leachman's way. Having redressed the situation the matter would be closed as far as he was concerned and he would be off on some other duty. But the loss of Shithatha must have been to the extremists at Dair az Zor a bitter blow, for it was another most convenient base for subversive activities. Possibly we might have heard a little more about the matter in a later letter. But, as stated, the letter quoted above is the last letter he wrote.

CHAPTER XXVI

CORPORAL WING'S DIARY

THE events recorded in the previous chapter have been compiled chiefly from Leachman's own scanty letters and casual reports. We have been fortunate in tracing a diary kept by Corporal Frank Wing of the 6th L.A.M.B.'s (Light Armoured Motor Battery), which throws further light on the subject and affords an instance of how nothing but mere chance can ever reveal the full extent of Leachman's amazing exploits :

In a letter forwarding the extracts from his diary, Corporal Wing writes :

" I hope these notes may be of some help in writing the biography of Colonel Leachman, one of the greatest men and one of the greatest soldiers Britain has ever known. I do sincerely hope you will succeed in letting his countrymen know what he did for them. His name was a household word from one end of the country to the other. He knew every inch of the desert and every tribe in it. He was killed just before peace came. A pity he never lived to enjoy the fruits of his labour. Colonel Leachman was a man of extraordinary personality. Wherever he went he was respected by the Arabs partly because they all feared him."

The diary was kept from February 7, 1920, to October 22, 1920, and for the greater part of the

time Corporal Frank Wing was working in collaboration with Leachman. This is the story the diary tells :

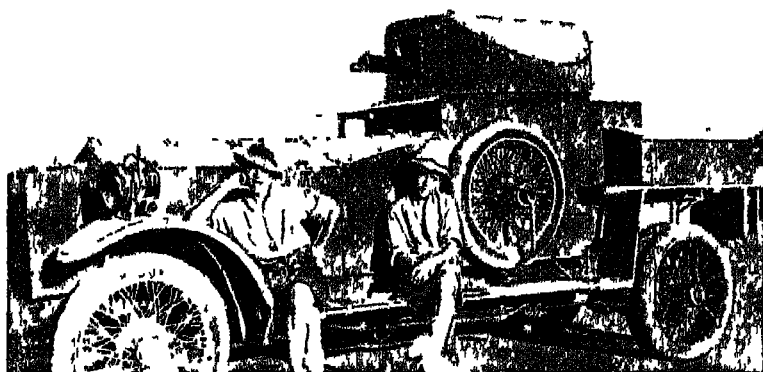
" Colonel Leachman was wonderfully well-informed—no information was too trivial for him whatever its nature. He used to employ a lot of children to whom he paid a small fee.

" He had a man whom he used chiefly to train his army of mounted Arabs which he employed principally in patrolling the desert and in helping him to collect taxes including one rupee (1s. 3d.) per date tree per annum.

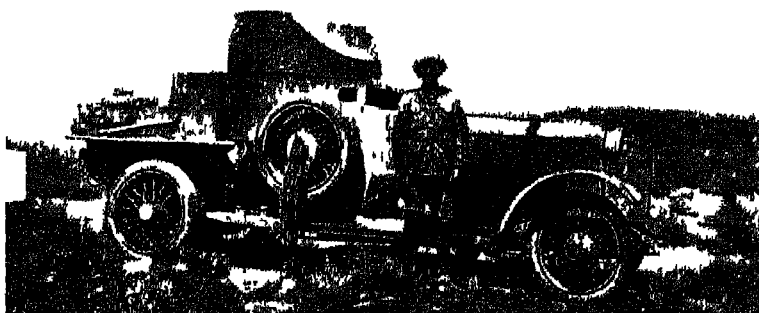
" He inaugurated an irrigation scheme at Ramadi by having trenches dug from the river bank inland to a distance of a mile or even two. These were filled by a water-wheel or by ponies continuously pulling skin buckets up from the river night and day. He had an office in Ramadi and the wall of the room in which he worked was at one period riddled with bullet holes from bullets which had been fired by his enemies at night on the off chance of getting him.

" When we joined the L.A.M.B.'s he came up to our camp and had a talk with us. He looked us over keenly and then addressed us as follows :—

" ' Look here, you chaps, I don't know you, but you'll do for me ; are there any of you who can drive a car ? ' ' No, sir.' ' Right, then, we'll teach you sharp—because these men whom you have come to relieve haven't got home from the war yet.' That was in 1920 and a sorry lot they looked, too. He told these men they would be on their way home in three weeks, he was right. He told us he would have Colonel Johnson, commanding the L.A.M.B.'s, up to pass



'THE AVENGER' WITH HER DRIVER F. WING (ON LEFT)
WHICH CARRIED LEACHMAN ON MANY OF
HIS FAMOUS EXPEDITIONS



THE 'SILVER DART' AND L/CORPORAL SUMMERS
HER 'PILOT'.

[See Page 352]

Photograph taken by Captain Kermit Roosevelt D.S.O.

us out in under three weeks. He was right again. This result was due to the efforts of Captain Harper, M.C., A.S.C., attached to the 6th L.A.M.B.'s, and Lieutenant Goring.

" 30.3.20. He took us to Albu Kemal over the river track via Hit, Khan Baghdadi, Adetha, Fuami, Ana, Nahya and Al Quimi, a distance of about 200 miles. He then put us on convoy work between Albu Kemal and Ana. The armoured cars operating with him were 'Victory,' 'Avenger,' 'Impregnable' and 'Chatham.'

" 5.4.20. There was work he wanted us to do—one of our aeroplanes had been shot down by the Arabs and the pilot captured. Colonel Leachman and Lieutenant Goring took the main parts out of it and then set fire to it. Later on Colonel Leachman rescued the pilot.

" 10.4.20. The cars reinforced by two fighting Fords were suddenly ordered out—we were to proceed to Saliya, 25 miles north of Albu Kemal—only Colonel Leachman knew what the business was—he got into my car, 'Avenger,' and just said 'drive to my hand.' There was no road, not even a track of any description. Just miles of barrenness with boulders strewn about, it looked as if, at some time or other, a volcano had created it.

" Colonel Leachman took us to what was known as 'M' point, 10 miles N. of Saliya. We were 100 yards above the river, while on the other bank which was almost level with the river the Arabs were cultivating their land.

" The Arabs had refused to pay taxes, as they claimed that they no longer owed allegiance to the British, so he was bent on making them do so, and he ordered us to spread out to a distance

of 50 yards apart, and give them a good straffing with six Vickers guns.

"We had the best of the game as we were so high up that their rifle fire could not touch us.

"Colonel Leachman had an ordinary rifle and he spent his time alternatively firing his rifle and shouting for all he was worth down a megaphone. This game went on for four days. Colonel Leachman was determined that if they did not pay up they should not cultivate their crops.

"Things did not seem to suit him so we drove off, again guided by his hand; he guided us straight to a party of Bedouin—how he knew they were there goodness knows—who turned out to be Sheikh Turki Bey. After talking to the latter for a while the sheikh got into the car and his tribesmen mounted and came too, shouting and yelling all the way back to 'M' point. The old sheikh then got hold of the megaphone and gave the recalcitrant Arabs a piece of his mind. But it had not the slightest effect. But Colonel Leachman was not to be beaten, and he called in the help of the Air Force. After a daily dose of bombs they paid up.

"Two days later he got back to Albu Kemal, which was the advanced headquarters for all the Euphrates operations.

"We had just cleaned our cars and got them ready for the road again and sat chatting together about recent events when in walked Colonel Leachman.

"We thought he was joking when he said with a grin 'If you were wanted for action how long would it take you to get on the road?'

"'Two minutes, sir.' 'Right,' he said, 'have the "Avenger" on the road in two minutes,

prepared for action ! ' We were there in the time mentioned. He sprang in and said, ' Drive like hell ' up the main track to Damascus. After going about 30 miles he saw what he was looking for—a party of Bedouins had cut the telegraph wires for about half-a-mile, and having fastened the poles on to camels, were doing a steady trot into the desert with the wires trailing behind. (Note. This was a trick employed by Lawrence in the Hedjaz.) We caught them up, and at Colonel Leachman's instructions, fired over their heads to scare them.

" Then Colonel Leachman leapt out of the car and said ' fire the Vickers into the middle of them if I shout.' We said, ' What about you ? ' He said, ' Never you mind about me, do as I tell you. I shall stand just as much chance as they will ! '

" We then saw a sight I shall never forget as long as I live.

" There were 30 armed Bedouins and he had nothing but a stick, but he dashed in among them.

" Hell was let loose—we stood spellbound in the car while he fought 30 Bedouin single-handed. Believe me, there were some cracked skulls when he had finished. Every Arab, with the exception of five who ran away, were down and out or on their knees yelling for mercy ; but he showed none.

" When at last he had finished he picked two of them up and dragged them back to the car—and what a mess all three of them were in. Colonel Leachman was saturated with blood.

" He picked them up and threw them bodily into the car.

" If ever there was action better worthy of a ' V.C.' I should like to know of it.

"Next morning he tried them himself at Albu Kemal, and fined them a large sum of money which was paid in gold, sheep, goats, jewellery and fodder, every member of the tribe contributing.

"As you know, Arabs are big talkers, and a lot of argument went on over this matter of the fines. But Colonel Leachman could talk an Arab's head off and at this period his own language seemed foreign to him, he spoke it so little.

"In any case he seldom spoke and then only when he needed something. There were some big Arabs, but Colonel Leachman topped them all. He was very wiry, and when out in the desert, which was so frequently the case, went the whole day on only a few dates. He lived and looked just like an Arab—and acted the part in every particular. We would make up a drum of tea, and get our 'bully-beef' and biscuits, but he would just have his dates. Yet he was always wonderfully fit.

"4.5.20. We proceeded with Colonel Leachman to Mayadin to sign peace with Hamo Sharro. It was a queer business—we were lectured and schooled by Colonel Leachman as to what we were or were not to do. Our instructions were to eat with them, no matter what they were eating. No one knew the road, not even Colonel Leachman, but the tribe had a man out in the desert waving a white flag and he acted as our guide.

"On the way we caught up with a queer-looking cart which proved to be the American Mission flying the 'Stars and Stripes.' Colonel Leachman got out and talked to them, but later they were all murdered at Mayadin, or so we heard.

" When we reached our destination the head tribesman simply worshipped Colonel Leachman, and they went off to talk over their peace business. Colonel Leachman seemed doubtful of the result, for he told us to have the cars facing the desert with their engines running.

" The people of Mayadin proved to be a very ' rum ' lot. In the first place they were devil-worshippers and we had instructions from Colonel Leachman that on no account were we to use the word ' Lettuce ' (I do not know how it is spelt) in their presence. I do not know what it means, but that was the order.

" All the men who were of any account had all their hair shaved off and their heads were one mass of tattoos. They had never seen a motor before, and when we were nearing the place they ran like hell. After a bit the bravest of them came back and gradually the crowd increased until I should say that every living creature was round us ; if they had had their way the cars would have been smashed up for souvenirs.

" They made us a great spread, in their manner ; it consisted of a cart-load of boiled rice with a couple of goats, roasted whole, on top. We had little brass cups to drink out of, pretty little things they were, too. I forgot to leave mine behind when we had finished, so it rests on my sideboard now as an ornament.

" When we sat down to the meal two of our men refused to eat the food, which disgusted them, but this was an insult to our hosts—strangely enough they both got murdered in a horrible manner later on.

" Colonel Leachman later gave the people a demonstration in car driving, and we eventually got away and drove at a great speed trying to
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beat the night, for we had only our own tracks to follow.

"But it was not to be and darkness came very suddenly, for me at least, for I awoke to find myself in Colonel Leachman's arms and I could hear him saying, 'He's coming round.' I had been knocked unconscious. He then told me that we had struck a hole in the sand. The impact snatched the steering-wheel from my hands and the car turned a complete somersault. The turret left the car and dropped fifty feet away. I was inside the turret. The Vickers gun smashed in Lieut. Clements's face and Driver Dyson had the steering-wheel half-way through his chest.

"Colonel Leachman and Lieut. Goring salvaged the car and brought her back under her own power. There was nothing wrong with the engine, which speaks well for the Rolls Royce.

"This visit of Colonel Leachman's seemed to be in preparation for the evacuation of the Upper Euphrates; anyway, the troops evacuated Albu Kemal on 8.5.20. Colonel Leachman brought the whole contingent, which consisted of the 51st Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Cunningham, an 18-pounder battery, a mountain battery, 6th Jats and a troop of Bengal Lancers, the hospital with its personnel, the sick and wounded, safely into Ana by a desert track only known to himself, in order to avoid being attacked.

"The Royal Air Force also did valuable work in keeping the hostile Bedouin well in rear by bombs and machine-gun fire.

"The first part of the withdrawal being safely completed, the troops remained at Ana for a while. While there, trouble broke out at Mosul,

so we proceeded down to Hit where we met Colonel Leachman on 18.5.20. He had an old boat made into a ferry boat, and on 21.5.20 took the cars, 'Harvester,' 'Desmond,' 'Impregnable' and 'Chatham,' over the Euphrates. It was a difficult task for the river was very swift. Colonel Leachman then guided us to a place 25 miles S.W. of Mosul, and immediately tackled the mischief-makers who seemed to be Turks as well as Arabs. He took them in rear when their attention was occupied by the troops in front.

"He stayed there two days dealing with the situation and then, having settled the matter, we turned back once more to the south.

"On the way back there was great trouble because of water and the desperate nature of the situation may be judged from the fact that we had to urinate into the radiators.

"Colonel Leachman made for Fort Rawa on the left bank of the Euphrates opposite Ana. He had no sooner reached Fort Rawa, which was on 25.5.20, than we were attacked by a strong body of hostile Arabs, but we drove them off with machine-gun fire.

"On 30.5.20 Colonel Leachman took three armoured cars to put down trouble which had broken out with two tribes near an old fort two miles E. of Al Qaim, still on the left bank of the river. There was fighting going on, but it ceased the moment they recognized Colonel Leachman.

"He settled matters and came back the same day to Ana.

"On 11.6.20 trouble broke out on a bigger scale still at Al Qaim. The sheikh who was causing the trouble was Sheikh Haftoun, and he had a very large following. So a mixed force

was sent against him consisting of artillery, infantry, cavalry and armoured cars. Colonel Leachman took a party of his mounted Arabs. He led them into action himself. One of those in front had the top of his head blown off, and the rest of them turned round to gallop off. But Colonel Leachman was round in a flash and rallied them and led them back into the thick of the fight. Sheikh Haftoun lost 50 killed, and considerable booty was taken from him.

"After the action the troops came back to Nihayia, getting harassed and sniped wherever possible.

"14.6.20 finds Colonel Leachman back on the left bank of the river with the armoured cars and one fighting Ford doing flank guard to the troops, who now made a further withdrawal. This was completed by the 22nd. Lieut. Goring got the D.S.O. and M.C., Lieut. Clements the M.C. Five of us got recommended for the Military Medal and two for the D.C.M., which is sufficient testimony for the nature of the work. Colonel Leachman got *nothing* but the admiration and respect of those of us he led with such wonderful gallantry and brilliance.

"On 12.7.20 Colonel Leachman came to the camp at Ramadi with secret orders. Hostile Arabs had taken two of his political officers prisoners as hostages at Ana and wanted a big price for them. Six of us and two officers were selected for the work to be done. Colonel Leachman said he preferred to have unmarried men as there was not much chance of getting back, as there were thousands of hostile Arabs in Ana, and he advised us to make our wills if we had anything to leave, as the chances of getting away were small indeed.

"He intended to make a 'smash and grab' business of it and depended on the boldness of the move and on secrecy for success.

"We set off in the dead of night. No lights were allowed. We reached Hit well before dawn, being again guided by Colonel Leachman, who knew his way as well by night as by day.

"Here we had to wait for one of his spies. He came and informed us that the Arabs had dug up the road as far as Adetha. Our way was therefore barred.

"Colonel Leachman decided to wait concealed till the following nightfall and then to make a detour through the desert to Ana. At four o'clock in the afternoon another informer came in and reported that the officers had been murdered. So we regretfully returned to Ramadi."

The diary of the L.A.M.B.'s continues, but the episode recorded above is the last of their association with Leachman.

It gives us but a glimpse of Leachman's activities—what happened on the dates not recorded we will never know. Chance has given us this record and Leachman's countrymen will be grateful to the man who recorded these events. One of that unique band of heroes who fought so splendidly in the hours of peril and who now, like so many others, has gone back to his existence in a northern town where work is denied him and fear haunts his life. Yet even in his distress he sent this tribute to the leader he loved.

Leachman himself has left no record of the events described. He never talked of them, he never wrote of them even to his family. Only this we know, that hardly a day passed in which he was not in danger.

After the troops had gone he was left alone, and

single-handed he brought peace to the Euphrates valley. How did he do it? By going into the thick of the trouble and by his personalty, indomitable courage, honesty, fierceness, wrath and the goodness and kindness of his great heart.

The troops goaded the Arabs to frenzy, but Leachman was the miracle of his hour. The total experiences of his amazing life were utilized in this supreme crisis. Every quality he possessed, even his faults, served the cause of England.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FATAL AUGUST 12

LEACHMAN remained at Ramadi during the month of July and the beginning of August. The virulence of the propaganda launched by the Nationalists exceeded anything so far experienced, and the task of the administration became increasingly more difficult. Leachman, however, still maintained his grip on the situation on the Euphrates, but the strain was beginning seriously to tell on him. As he had written in his letter of August 6 he had very nearly had as much as he could stand.

Sir Arnold Wilson tells us that, up to August 12 no actual outbreak had occurred between Baghdad and Ramadi or on the Euphrates above Falluja—"Sheikh Ali Sulaiman of the Dulaim remained staunch, and the Zoba tribe under Sheikh Dhari were sullen, but inactive."

Nevertheless, trouble was obviously brewing and Leachman, although not happy in his mind about the state of affairs, felt confident that he could control the situation, as he had done so many times before. On August 11 he went into Baghdad, where he spent the night, partly to discuss the situation with his chief, and partly to try to trace the whereabouts of his servant Hassan, who, fearing punishment for some misdemeanour, had absented himself three weeks previously.

Sir Arnold Wilson gives the following brief account of what transpired up to the time when he left Baghdad :

"He (Leachman) seemed fairly confident that so long as Ali Sulaiman could retain his hold over the Dulaim there would be no serious trouble between Baghdad and Falluja, or further north. He left my office at about eleven o'clock next morning, saying that he would be in Falluja by three o'clock and would telegraph fully to me. He added that he had told Sheikh Dhari to meet him at Khan Nuqta, mid-way between Baghdad and Falluja, and asked for authority to waive the repayment by Sheikh Dhari of certain advances made to him for the purchase of seed grain during the previous year."¹

Although Leachman had safely reached Baghdad on August 11, another car coming in some hours later had been fired on. This fact decided him to make a late start, as dawn, the hour at which he usually travelled, would be the most dangerous time on the road. He was accompanied by the other Hassan and was driven by an Arab driver. At 12.30 p.m. he met Sheikh Dhari, the Zoba, at Khan Nuqta, as arranged. By two o'clock Leachman was dead, and the Zoba tribe, which he had so long and so successfully controlled, was in revolt.

The news had spread like a fire through the tribal country between the two rivers and up to the very walls of Baghdad: "Lijman is gone, all government is finished." For as Colonel J. E. Tennant has rightly said, "Throughout the Eastern Desert people were under the impression that it was Leachman who commanded the British forces, and even that he was the King of England."²

The cry was taken up by other tribes on the Euphrates. The ignorant and fanatical tribesmen,

¹*Mesopotamia 1917-1920*, by Lt.-Col. Sir Arnold Wilson, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O., p. 292.

²*In the Clouds above Baghdad*, by Lieut.-Col. J. E. Tennant, D.S.O., M.C.

conceiving all ordered government to be at an end, left their occupations and seized their weapons, and anarchy reigned where Leachman had ruled supreme.

What happened at that tragic interview has now to be recounted :

“ Sheikh Dhari, his sons Sulaiman and Khamis and a slave, were awaiting Leachman outside the khan where there were also a Shabana officer and ten men. Leachman entered the khan with Sheikh Dhari and sat with him in one of the rooms discussing tribal affairs. While they were talking, a party of Arabs arrived and stated that they had been stopped and robbed about two miles from the khan in the direction of Baghdad.

“ Sheikh Dhari at once requested Leachman to send the Shabanas to arrest the robbers. He insisted that for the sake of maintaining order this should be done and at once. Leachman agreed and ordered the Shabana officer to take his men together with five men of the Zoba for this purpose, *but not to go beyond two miles from the khan*. The fact that Leachman made this latter stipulation is highly significant.

“ There were now left at the khan Leachman, Sheikh Dhari, his son Sulaiman and a slave in the room, while in the courtyard were Leachman's boy, Hassan, possibly another Zoba tribesman, and the motor-driver.

“ There appeared to have followed some considerable discussion between Leachman and Sheikh Dhari regarding the robbery, and for which Leachman held the Zoba responsible. At length he rose to go, and as he passed through the doorway in advance of Dhari he was shot in the back, and fell to the ground. As he lay

there, he asked Dhari why he had shot him as he had never done him an injury. Whereupon the latter drew his sword and killed him. The murderers then killed the motor-driver and pursued and killed Hassan, who had tried to escape. It must be stated, however, that this latter point has never been satisfactorily cleared up. His body was never found and he has not been heard of from that day to this.

"Shortly afterwards the Shabanas returned. They were stripped and deprived of their horses and arms ; and it was they who, walking into Falluja, gave the news of the assassination."

As has been stated already, within a short while the whole Zoba tribe had risen. The troops in Falluja were only sufficient to hold the town itself, and as the whole country was in the hands of the insurgents it was impossible to recover Leachman's body immediately. He lay as he had fallen for two days in the doorway of the khan. On August 14 Lieut. Goring, of the 6th Light Armoured Motor Battery, reconnoitring in the light armoured car "Harvester," entered the khan and recovered Leachman's body and brought it to Falluja, where he was buried in the Military Camp on August 15.

So perished Leachman, who, with the truth expressed in his dying words, had never done his murderers any harm, who, on the contrary, had interceded with Wilson but a few hours previously for their benefit. That gallant spirit which living knew no rest was at last at peace.

There is small doubt that the murder was premeditated and carefully arranged, and that the Shabana guard were deliberately got out of the way. It is highly improbable that anything that Leachman said, or did, precipitated the crime. He seems to

have suspected something of his peril from his injunctions to the Shabana not to proceed too far, and from his late start, and that fact is further borne out by Miss Bell's account of his last evening in Baghdad which is mentioned below. Nevertheless, he was unarmed at the time, having, as usual, left his revolver in his car.

Although the tribal areas were very unsettled, neither Captain Carver nor Captain Pitcairn, Leachman's assistant Political Officers at Ramadi, had any inkling that so serious a disaster was likely to occur. The latter wrote that only a few days before the tragedy, Captain Williams, the Commandant of Gendarmerie at Ramadi, had actually spent a night in Dhari's tent. But then he was not Leachman. The murder of Williams would have profited Dhari nothing.

"None of us," Captain Pitcairn continues, "had the slightest idea of anything desperate being contemplated in that area in the way of a rising. I am certain, too, that Colonel Leachman himself, although not happy in his mind regarding the situation, suspected nothing. I am afraid we had all grown to think of Colonel Leachman's safety as a matter of course wherever he went, such a respect had all the tribes for him and for his sense of justice. I have heard it said in casual conversation more than once, that, in the event of his ever being captured, he would never be harmed by any of the tribes. . . . The most one can say is that he was not satisfied with the situation below Falluja. As regards political situations he rarely confided in any of us his own thoughts, and it is conceivable that he considered trouble in the Division would start there owing to its proximity to Baghdad and the

likelihood of the evil effects of propaganda from Baghdad among the tribes. However, I am sure that, whatever he felt about it, he was confident he could easily deal with it. He had done so in countless cases before, and when things were in a worse state, and in every case his power of concentration and personality had put down any trouble there was. . . ."

As Captain Pitcairn says, Leachman rarely confided his own thoughts regarding political matters to anyone else; and, although he may have felt confident of dealing with the situation, there seems to be little doubt that he was far more anxious regarding the situation than he admitted either to his chief or to his assistants.

Miss Bell has told us that on the night before his murder he dined with a friend at the Maude Hotel in Baghdad. Before they parted he admitted that he was not looking forward to the task ahead of him. "It is getting a bit too hot out there," he had said. Nevertheless, as Captain Carver wrote in a letter to Leachman's mother, "Few save your son would have had the gallantry to carry on just as though nothing was happening. It was not recklessness, as the right thing undoubtedly was to show the Arabs we were not afraid of them, and his presence was always a steadying influence."

In the same manner as he had left England when the call came, although he felt certain he was going to his death, so, on that fatal August 12, Leachman did not hesitate to face the issue. His high sense of duty impelled him to go to the death he knew might well be awaiting him.

The news of his murder was received with stupefaction and dismay by British and Arabs alike. When the circumstances under which he died became

known, even the Zoba tribe itself cursed the murderer and his sons with bitter hatred. Stern and rugged men of the Anaiza were not ashamed of the tears which flowed down their cheeks and twenty thousand Bedouin clamoured to avenge him.

The news spread throughout the desert like a prairie fire ; but many received it with incredulity. They would not believe that any man would slay "Lijman." To this day many think that he still lives. Only a year ago a party of travellers were saved from a perilous situation by the chance mention of his name.

Even the unwarlike Ageyl merchants received the tidings with unbounded grief and scorching anger. A few days after the news became public, one of these called upon Miss Bell and, after suitable greetings, as she tells us, "sat down with a face convulsed with grief. 'It was Colonel Leachman who had been his father and mother,' he said. 'What was the government going to do to avenge his death? He and his wanted to take part!' At that he broke into sobs, his tears coursing down his cheeks. 'The dogs,' he cried, 'the swine, the traitors. They had nothing but good at his hands and they shot him in the back. How could these dogs stand up to his face?' At last he wiped away his tears with the tail of his long cotton sleeve and went sorrowfully away."

But vengeance for so foul a crime could not be left to the Arabs. And in September it was levied in terrible fashion by British troops whose anger knew no bounds. Dhari, with a price on his head, and his sons fled in fear, alike from their British pursuers, and men of their own race. The rebellion in the Dulaim and throughout Mesopotamia was crushed and great clemency was shown. Peace came. But for Dhari there was neither pardon nor peace. He had slain

a man unjustly and for his crime there was no mitigating circumstance. Where then could peace be found for him? "He who shall slay a man without having suffered violence at his hands shall be as though he had slain all mankind."

The years went by, but he was not forgotten and the price was still on his head. One day an Arab hired a motor-taxi in the town of Mosul, and the driver drove him straight to the police station and delivered him to justice—for his fare was Dhari the murderer. He was tried in January, 1928, in Baghdad, and received a life sentence from the High Court. Nevertheless, the expiation of his crime was removed from human agency, for two days later Dhari died in prison of heart failure.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BELOVED CITY

THE morning of February 28, 1921, dawned bright and clear. Men and animals passed to and fro, in unhurried security, along the road from Falluja to Baghdad.

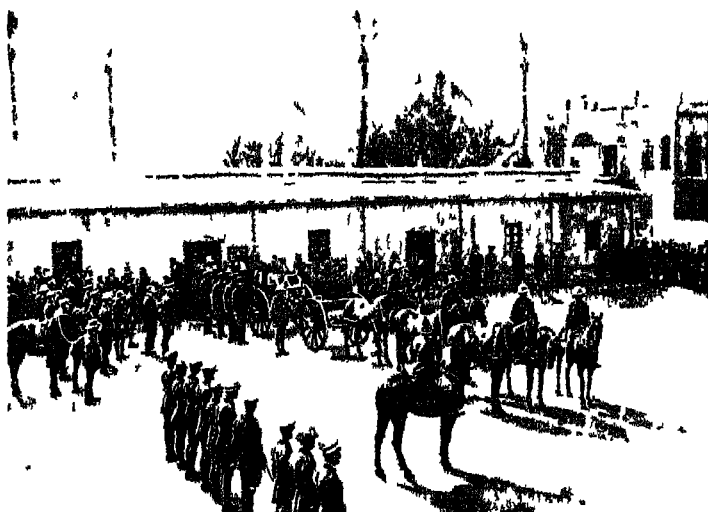
On either side the country stretched away in an apparently limitless plain. Here and there its flatness was broken by a clump of palm trees, or by clusters of widely-separated villages, sprinkled haphazard upon a patchwork carpet of brown and green. The green was the young corn bright and fresh in the morning sunlight; the brown patches of coarse grass on which scattered groups of cattle, sheep and camels browsed lazily.

No sound broke the stillness save that of a chance motor-car or the dull rattle of a carriage. This land now basking so restfully had but a short while previously witnessed the march of armed men and echoed to the sound of guns and the crackle of musketry. The din of strife had died away, peace reigned—a peace that was destined to endure.

Along this road a few hours later Leachman passed on his last journey to his resting-place in Baghdad. His body, reverently disinterred from its temporary resting-place in Falluja, had been placed on the light armoured car "Harvester," the same in which Lieut. Goring had recovered Leachman's body at Khan Nuqta. Garlanded with flowers and draped with the Union Jack it passed slowly along the Falluja road toward Baghdad. Strange that the

vehicle which so gently conveyed Leachman's body should be the "Harvester." It had so often sowed death; now it carried the man who in life had striven to quell the abounding fierceness and hatreds of those who dwelt in the lands through which it now passed. The seed which Leachman and others had sown had grown to fruition, and was now to be garnered. The reward of their labours was the peace which then reigned and which happily endures to-day.

Reaching the bridge of boats across the Tigris, the traffic was halted to enable the "Harvester" to continue with its precious burden. The waiting multitudes gazed in respectful silence. The stillness was broken by a sudden rumble, like the muffled beat of drums, as the car passed over the loose, wooden planks. To the accompaniment of this solemn sound Leachman crossed the frontier of the desert into the city which he had loved. Thence the car proceeded to the Garrison Church where the coffin was laid for the night and a guard mounted over it. At 2 p.m. the following day the funeral service was held. The church was packed; outside a multitude awaited the termination of the service. At its conclusion the coffin was placed upon a gun-carriage, magnificently prepared by those who strove by their labour on it to honour the man they had so respected and loved, for the gun was one of those which had fought with Leachman at Albu Kemal. It was escorted by two companies of the Irish Fusiliers. When all was in readiness the procession started and made its way solemnly through the streets of Baghdad packed with multitudes of people. A short way outside the north gate of the city one company of the Irish Fusiliers halted and lined the road while the gun-carriage went by, and then fell in behind. The band then started a dirge



THE GUN-CARRIAGE BEARING LEACHMAN'S BODY
TO HIS LAST RESTING PLACE



LEACHMAN BEING TENDERLY LAID TO REST
IN THE 'BELOVED CITY'

and the procession continued at a slow march to the cemetery. The last service was read over the grave. The troops fired three volleys. The bugles sounded the "Last Post," followed by the reveille. The final tribute had been paid to the man who, living, all had honoured.

.

Leachman had many claims to distinction and to the admiration and gratitude of his countrymen, but none greater than for his work among the wilder elements of Iraq and the Bedouin tribes of the western desert. These and the semi-settled tribes may possibly once more flare up into revolt, but their unrest will never again be caused solely by a desire to plunder or by rapaciousness. It will be the outcome of harsh treatment and to safeguard that wider justice which Leachman taught them to value and to defend. The fires of disorder will only be quenched when they are satisfied that their newborn liberty is no longer threatened. Leachman's life was sacrificed, but not uselessly. His death brought home to those among whom he had laboured for so long the nobility of his work. Only when he was dead did these men realize the full significance of his defence of their rights and the value of the maintenance of that peace which he had forced upon them with such steadfast courage. The death of the man who had borne on his own shoulders the burden of their welfare with such unflinching resolution, made them realize that, from now onwards, they had to fend for themselves and establish by their own conduct their rights to the benefits he had bestowed upon them.

His work was finished, theirs had just begun. The future will undoubtedly show that the freedom of the individual, honesty of administration and justice, of which the foundations were laid by the

sacrifice of thousands of the Empire's sons and by the unselfish labours of the British political officers in Mesopotamia, will have no fiercer defenders than those restless spirits to whom Leachman became as a father and whose name among them is still the synonym for honour, justice and truth.

APPENDIX

THREE TRIBUTES

HERE is a character sketch given by Fahed Bey, paramount sheikh of 15,000 fighting men :

“ He (Leachman) was tolerant, and not haughty. During his raids he used to ride a camel leading his horse after him, just as the Arabs do, and he looked after himself, refusing to have any servant. If any of our men wished to minister to him, he declined, saying that he was just a man like them, and he would share their fate, eat, drink, ride, and even draw water from the wells as they did. He baked his bread on the fire and ate it, rode a camel without anyone's assistance and galloped on its back like any Bedu, whose fathers and forefathers had been used to such feats.

“ He slept folded in his *farwa* (fur) and *aba* on the bare ground and in the scrub without any cover or tent, and endured the hardships of rain and storm and sun.

“ His energy and indefatigable endurance of the conditions of desert life surpassed those of any of its habitués. His sojourn in the desert endeared him to all and they regarded him as one of their sheikhs, for he spoke gently with them and never vexed or enraged any of them ; and if they needed anything he was ready to help them. He would not tolerate they should be treated wrongly.

" He knew every hole in the desert, every wadi and hill, and all the watering places, and he knew their names correctly and could travel to them unguided.

" This is our knowledge of Colonel Leachman during his stay with our tribes."

" (Signed) Fahed Bey al Hadhdhal.

" Sheikh of the Amarat Anaiza."

And then Miss Gertrude Bell has left us a short description of him, which portrays him as he appeared to one who, herself, had lived in the black tents and who has her own name enrolled among Arabian explorers :

" An intrepid pioneer, whether in travel or in frontier administration, Colonel Leachman's character and vocation could be read on his person. Lean and active, dressed in ancient riding kit, his face full of weather, so that it looked as if sun and wind and rain had had more to do with the making of it than any human progenitor. The somewhat rugged landscape of his countenance was lit by his eyes, by the acute, observant glance of one whose business it is to make a rapid appreciation of men and things and take instant action.

" His duties did not lead him often to headquarters ; though when they did, there was no one who more enjoyed a good dinner with selected friends and no one who could make the hours pass more gaily with caustic tales of the ways and sayings of the folk who lived in his native land, the wilds, but the stories were not all from his quarter ; a Bedouin sheikh would drop into your office and relate how 'Naj'm' (the star, so he was frequently called in the western desert—a star of erratic course) had

arrived in his *trambail* (motor car) at some remote grazing ground: 'And, wallah! that *trambail* is like a steed under him. It leaps the wadis and it rushes over the spring grass, wallah! like a horse bred among the tribes. And then we offered the slaughtering (*Qadanna al dhabihah*—the narrator alluded to the sheep which had been seethed for supper) and "Najm" sat by the fire and we talked through the night.' But he would add, ruefully: 'He has a strong hand, wallah!' from which it might be gathered that the talk was not wholly unrelated to tribal misdemeanours.

"I met him coming back from one of these excursions, on horseback that time. It was on the road from the Euphrates Bridge to Kufa, through the ruts and furrows of which my *trambail* was struggling. To us, from the sandy hillocks, emerged a strange company, half in uniform, half in Arab robes, Colonel Leachman in the midst of it and, except for the white tabs of the political officer on his collar, indistinguishable from the rest. All were armed, one carried a hawk on his wrist, the Arab greyhounds ran at the horses' heels—'Naj'm' travelled like any of his brother magnates of the desert. The same hospitable colleague housed us that night, the *dhabihah* was offered and the talk got under way. It grew and grew in verisimilitude till towards midnight I tactfully went to bed. Our host was rather hollow-eyed next morning, though he declared that he had spent an unforgettable evening, but 'Naj'm's' countenance was inscrutable, and after a hearty breakfast he mounted his horse, collected his rapsallion escort and set out on his way to God knows where."

Here is a tribute from the Chief of the Shammar Toqah. This tribe was acting for the greater part of the war on the side of the Turks. This magnificent tribute from the leader of an enemy tribe is, therefore, all the more remarkable.

“ February 1, 1925.

“ I have the honour to send you enclosed a statement of what I know personally of Colonel Leachman while he was with us. I am very glad to be able to contribute something to his memory.

“ (Signed) CHALLUB AL. SABR.

“ Chief of Shammar Toqah.

“ Colonel Leachman was hot-tempered, easily excitable and ready to forgive, he loved truth, hated falsehood and recognized the rights of friendship; smiling, he would soon apologize for his outbursts, and compensated good for evil. Deep-sighted and true to his word, he avoided lying and was ever straightforward and good humoured. He liked to make many friends and therefore chatted kindly with young and old. He did not attempt to make any show of himself. He possessed a very good memory and was resolute.

“ Once he asked me to fetch him the chiefs of all the sections under my jurisdiction, and when they came he put them under arrest and sent one of my dearest friends to the guard room. That, we had all learned by then, meant deportation, God knows where. I approached him for their release, but he was in a bad mood just then and told me not to mediate for such dangerous persons.

“ When he was himself again half an hour later, he sent for me and informed me that Sir

Percy Cox had sent orders for the arrest of a certain Aufi Ibn Sakhil, who had been reported to have tendencies towards the Turks and was intending to join their camp. I promised to do my best for his arrest, but that that would be accomplished much more easily if the chiefs were released. He entertained my request ; but on arriving home I found to my utter disgust that the fugitive was enjoying safety under my own roof. He noticed the change of my expression and inquired the reason. I told him that unless he departed by the morrow he would bring on me and my tribe complete destruction at the hands of the British troops. He told me that he was entirely at my mercy and disposal. Here I was in a dilemma, knowing not what course to take ; to deliver him to Colonel Leachman would be a horrible breach of Arab traditions and would attach to me and my house an unerasable blot of treachery. So I decided to accompany him with four of my men and help him across the border of the Turkish camp.

"When I went to Colonel Leachman I narrated to him the whole story and pointed out to him how disgraceful it was to deliver a fugitive who had sought one's refuge. He was very disappointed on hearing of the man's escape and uttered not a word for about half an hour. Then he came and sat beside me and said that I had done right in not delivering the man under these circumstances. He said he was proud of my noble action and that had I done otherwise I would have fallen in his esteem, and as a proof of his satisfaction he handed to me an award of L. T. 100."

Durga Sah Muni in Library,

Varanasi, U. P.

दुर्गासाह मुनिसिखल लाइब्रेरी

वाराणसी

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